

HEALTH

Reusable shopping bags pose a risk to our health.

Hundreds of millions of reusable bags are imported from China and other countries each year.¹ While many reusable bags are safe, many others have tested with high levels of lead and are potentially harmful.

Even reusable bags without lead could pose a risk to you and your family if not washed properly after each use. Microbiologists have found harmful bacteria in reusable bags such as E. coli, salmonella and fecal coliform, which can cause food borne illness.

Toxic Lead

- Lab results reveal unsafe levels of toxic lead in many reusable bags.²
- The lead, usually found on the inside of reusable bags, can rub off onto food, permitting families to ingest the harmful substance.³
- Lead can cause irreversible damage to the nervous systems and major organs. It inhibits the body's ability to regulate vitamin D, form red blood cells properly, and can cause seizures, coma and death. Children can suffer from developmental delay, lower IQ, hyperactivity, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, impaired hearing and stunted growth.⁴
- As a result of these findings, many, including Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) called for a federal investigation into imports of reusable bags.⁵

Bacterial Contamination

- Harmful bacteria like E. coli, salmonella and fecal coliform thrive in reusable bags unless they are cleaned after each use with hot soapy water.⁶
- A Canadian study found bacteria build-up on reusable bags was 300 percent higher than what is considered safe.⁷
- Storing reusable bags in a hot car trunk—which many people do so they don't forget them at home—causes the bacteria to grow 10 times faster.⁸

¹ Tariff and trade data from U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. International Trade Commission.

² "[Excessive Amounts of Lead Found in Reusable Grocery Bags Supplied by Major Retailers, New Testing Shows](#);" Center for Consumer Freedom; January 24, 2011.

³ "[Assessment of the Potential for Cross Contamination of Food Products by Reusable Shopping Bags](#)"; University of Arizona School of Public Health; June 9, 2010.

⁴ "[Health Effects of Lead Exposure](#);" Oregon Department of Human Services

⁵ "[Schumer: Recent Reports Show Popular Reusable Grocery Bags Contain Dangerous Levels of Lead; Calls for Federal Agencies to Ban Grocery Bags with Lead](#);" United States Senate Press Release and Letter to HHS; November 18, 2010.

⁶ "[Food Safety Tips for Reusable Grocery Bags and Bins](#);" Health Canada; September 14, 2010.

⁷ "[A Microbiological Study of Reusable Bags and 'First or single-use' Plastic Bags](#)"; Environment and Plastics Industry Council; May 20, 2009.

⁸ "[Assessment of the Potential for Cross Contamination of Food Products by Reusable Shopping Bags](#)"; University of Arizona School of Public Health; June 9, 2010.