

For Immediate Release: May 11, 2017

The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

Fill your Shopping Cart with Groceries ... Not Germs

Martha Murphy
Wildcat District Extension Agent
Pittsburg EFNEP office

Are you filling your shopping cart with germs as well as groceries? Probably you are, but you don't have to! Here are some ways that you can protect yourself and your family from the germs that may lurk in your grocery store.

The shopping cart. The handle of your shopping cart can contain more bacteria, and even fecal matter, than an average public restroom. Plus, touching the handle after someone who might be carrying an infection is an easy way to transfer germs.



What to do? Most grocery stores offer sanitary wipes so that you can wipe down the shopping cart handle. If your store doesn't, bring your own. Or, at least, be sure to wash your hands after touching a cart.

The conveyor belt. That rotating checkout line conveyor belt can be a source of both dirt and germs.

What to do? To protect your foods against soiled and bacteria laden grocery store conveyor belts, never place fresh fruits or veggies directly on the conveyor belt. Instead, give them a ride only after you have wrapped them in a clean bag.

Reusable shopping bags. Researchers from Arizona and California tested 84 reusable bags and found high levels of bacteria in all of them.

What to do? If you're being eco-friendly by avoiding disposable bags and using cloth ones, be sure to wash them between uses. This will prevent your reusable bags from becoming a breeding ground for food-borne



bacteria. By laundering your reusable bags, you will kill 99.9% of the bacteria on them. Be both green and clean!

Produce misters. Many grocery stores use misters to spray their fresh produce on display so that it doesn't dry out. However, the water in the misters — and the moist environment they create — can become a breeding ground for germs. This is one more reason to protect your family from illness by keeping your produce as safe as possible.



What to do? Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under cool running water before eating them. Rub those with a firm skin or a hard rind briskly with your hands or a produce brush to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Before serving fresh leafy vegetables that have not been pre-washed and bagged, separate and individually rinse the leaves. Discard the outermost ones, such as on a head of lettuce or cabbage. Leaves can be difficult to clean, so put them in a clean bowl and soak them in cool water for a few minutes to loosen sand and dirt. (A clean bowl is better than the sink, which can be full of bacteria.) After rinsing, blot the leaves dry with paper towels or use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture.

For more information about healthy eating, contact the Wildcat Extension District, Crawford County, 620-724-8233, Labette County, 620-784-5337, Montgomery County, 620-331-2690, Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Our website is <http://www.wildcatdistrict.k-state.edu/> or follow us on Facebook: Wildcat Extension District.

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.