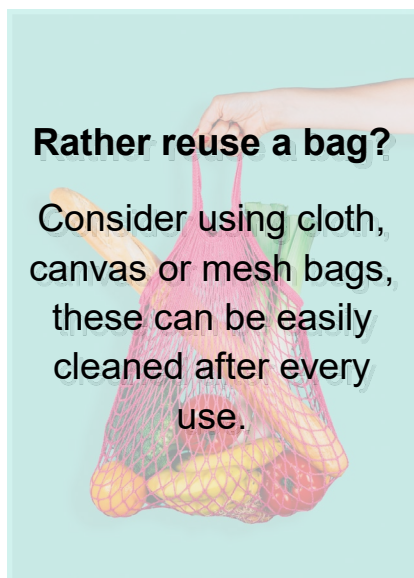# How to safely use reusable food containers

Are you considering using your own reusable food container at a grocery store or a restaurant? Are you interested in reducing the number of single-use containers that end up in landfills? Ottawa Public Health has some food safety tips to help you avoid the risk of food-related illness while you are living your zero-waste lifestyle.

First things first: Make sure the grocery store or restaurant you are visiting allows you to bring and use your own food containers. It is up to each individual business to come up with their own policy about the containers they allow.

The right container: It is important to use a container that can be easily cleaned and sanitized. Sanitizing will kill any germs that may remain after cleaning. Follow the cleaning and sanitizing steps below. The food container should also be in good condition; no cracks or open seams and does not rust.

Rather reuse a bag?

Consider using cloth, canvas or mesh bags, these can be easily cleaned after every use.

Keeping 'em clean: Don't use a dirty or unwashed container. Clean and sanitize each container you want to use every time before and after you use it.

There are two ways to do this:

- Clean your container in your dishwasher, **or**
- Follow these 4 steps:

  1. **Clean** the container and the lid with hot water and soap
  2. **Rinse** the container
  3. **Sanitize** the container with a chlorine solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach added per litre of water.
  4. **Air dry** on a clean surface.

Prevent cross-contamination: Bacteria are invisible to the naked eye. Containers might *look* clean but may still be carrying bacteria. Don't let scoops or spouts touch your container and don't set the container down in the food when filling it. Never put any food from your container back into a food bin. Remember to use separate containers for raw meats and ready-to-eat food items.

And don't forget! Wash your hands with hot soapy water before eating or starting your meal preparation.

For more food safety information visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca

09/2019

OttawaPublicHealth.ca
SantePubliqueOttawa.ca

613-580-6744
TTY/ATS : 613-580-9656

/Ottawa Health
/Ottawa Sante