

HANDBAGS... ?

I never gave it a thought. Who would have thought?

Have you ever noticed gals who sit their handbags on public toilet floors - then go directly to their dining tables and set it on the table? It happens a lot! It's not always the 'restaurant food' that causes stomach distress. Sometimes 'what you don't know 'will' hurt you'!

Read on...

Mom got so upset when guests came in the door and plopped their handbags down on the counter where she was cooking or setting up food. She always said that handbags are really dirty, because of where they have been.

Smart Mom!!! It's something just about every woman carries with them. While we may know what's inside our handbags, do you have any idea what's on the outside? Shauna Lake put handbags to the test - for bacteria - with surprising results. You may think twice about where you put your handbag.

Women carry handbags everywhere; from the office to public toilets to the floor of the car. Most women won't be caught without their handbags, but did you ever stop to think about where your handbag goes during the day?

'I drive a school bus, so my handbag has been on the floor of the bus a lot,' says one woman. 'On the floor of my car, and in toilets.' 'I put my handbag in grocery shopping carts, on the floor of the toilet while changing a nappy,' says another woman 'and of course in my home which should be clean.'

We decided to find out if handbags harbor a lot of bacteria. We learned how to test them at Nelson Laboratories in Salt Lake, and then we set out to test the average woman's handbag.

Most women told us they didn't stop to think about what was on the bottom of their handbag. Most said at home they usually set their handbags on top of kitchen tables and counters where food is prepared. Most of the ladies we talked to told us they wouldn't be surprised if their handbags were at least a little bit dirty. It turns out handbags are so surprisingly dirty, even the microbiologist who tested them was shocked.

Microbiologist Amy Karen of Nelson Labs says nearly all of the handbags tested were not only high in bacteria, but high in harmful kinds of bacteria. Pseudomonas can cause eye infections, staphylococcus aureus can cause serious skin infections, and salmonella and e-coli found on the handbags could make people very sick.

In one sampling, four of five handbags tested positive for salmonella, and that's not the worst of it. 'There is fecal contamination on the handbags,' says Amy. Leather or vinyl handbags tended to be cleaner than cloth handbags, and lifestyle seemed to play a role. People with kids tended to have dirtier handbags than those without, with one exception.

The handbag of one single woman who frequented nightclubs had one of the worst contaminations of all. 'Some type of feces, or possibly vomit' says Amy.

So the moral of this story - your handbag won't kill you, but it does have the potential to make you very sick if you keep it on places where you eat. Use hooks to hang your handbag at home and in toilets, and don't put it on your desk, a restaurant table, or on your kitchen countertop.

Experts say you should think of your handbag the same way you would a pair of shoes. 'If you think about putting a pair of shoes onto your countertops, that's the same thing you're doing when you put your handbag on the countertops' - your handbag has gone where individuals before you have sneezed, coughed,

spat, urinated, emptied bowels, etc! Do you really want to bring that home with you? The microbiologists at Nelson also said cleaning a handbag will help.

Wash cloth handbags and use leather cleaner to clean the bottom of leather handbags.