

Arkansas introduces clean shopping cart legislation

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[CBC News](#)

Arguing that shopping cart handles carry more germs than public restrooms, Arkansas state Representative Fred Allen has convinced his state legislature to pass a bill encouraging grocers to offer complementary sanitary wipes.

Allen's Arkansas Health-Conscious Shopper Program bill will now be signed into law by Gov. Mike Beebe.

"A lot of the shopping carts carry bodily fluid like blood, saliva, mucous, urine, fecal matter," he told CBC News.

Allen says he hopes the bill will raise public awareness and give shoppers some peace of mind.

"[This proposal] was brought to me by seniors in my district and one of their major concerns was that the shopping carts they were using at their grocery stores were unclean," he said. The bill encourages, but does not require, grocers to offer sanitary wipes to customers.

Allen says he hopes shoppers will frequent stores that offer the wipes and bypass those that don't.

"I think that once the public awareness reaches a new level you're going to see a lot of grocery stores, and a lot of stores that are not doing, they're going to start doing it," he said.

Sobeys offers wipes to Canadian shoppers

In Canada, the grocery chain Sobeys offers complementary wipes to its customers. Mike Lupien, a spokesman for Sobeys in Western Canada, said the supermarket chain decided to introduce the disinfectant wipes to curb the transfer of harmful bacteria.

"It's all about protecting our customers and even protecting our staff," Lupien said. "Shopping carts are a place where lots of people put their hands on them and there's different germs and bacteria and such that get on there."

While disinfectant wipes have become common household cleaning tools, experts disagree over their value. Some critics say that washing with hot water and soap is most effective, and that many bacteria are in fact helpful and are a part of our natural environment.

Some medical experts suggest that grocery cart handles may not be terribly harmful. Dr. Gerry Predy, medical officer of health for Capital Health Region in Edmonton, says a swab of a grocery cart handle may turn up common skin organisms and some germs that could cause gastrointestinal diarrhea-type illness.