

Food Safety and COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

How Is the Novel Coronavirus That Causes COVID-19 Transmitted?

SARS-CoV-2 is primarily transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets that enter the mouth, nose, or eyes by contaminated hands. There is no current evidence that SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted through food consumption.

How Can I Stay Safe While Grocery Shopping?

To prevent transmission, maintain at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and other shoppers. Avoid shaking hands, hugs, or other physical contact. Try to wipe frequently touched surfaces like grocery carts or basket handles with disinfectant wipes, if available. Avoid touching your face. Wearing a cloth mask in the store may reduce your risk of getting infected and reminds others to participate in social distancing. Before leaving the store or while waiting in the checkout line, use hand sanitizer if available.

Avoid shopping in public if you have symptoms such as fever or cough. If you are symptomatic, wearing a mask may help prevent transmission to others. Washing your hands frequently and maintaining distance between yourself and others are the best ways to prevent illness.

What Precautions Should I Take When Unpacking Groceries?

Time is on your side. Recent studies have shown that SARS-CoV-2 may remain infectious on surfaces or objects for up to 72 hours, but most virus on the surface of common materials becomes inactive (noninfectious) after the first 24 hours. There is limited evidence that virus particles on those products transmit disease. Virus on the surface of groceries will become inactivated over time after groceries are put away. The inner contents of sealed containers are unlikely to be contaminated. If using a disposable grocery bag, discard it once you are home. Reusable bags can be stored for later use. After unpacking your groceries, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Wipe surfaces with household disinfectants registered with the Environmental Protection Agency.

What Precautions Should I Take When Preparing Food?

If you consume foods soon after unpacking your groceries, be sure to practice good hand hygiene before eating. Do not share plates or silverware with others. Rinse off fruits and vegetables thoroughly with water before consumption.



Are There Any Additional Precautions for Older Adults?

Adults older than 65 years and persons with chronic medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to severe disease from COVID-19. If possible, limit shopping in public. Ask a neighbor or friend to pick up groceries and leave them outside your house or bring them into the house while maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet. Some grocery stores offer special hours in the morning for older adults to shop. Try calling your local grocery store to see if this is available near you. Some online suppliers will deliver groceries to your home.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Sources: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Food Safety and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Accessed March 29, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/newsletter/food-safety-and-Coronavirus.html>.

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