



COVID-19 AND FOOD SAFETY FAQ

IS CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) A CONCERN AT GROCERY STORES?

By: NC STATE EXTENSION

CDC, FDA and USDA are not aware of any reports at this time that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. Current evidence shows the biggest risk of transmission of COVID-19 is being around individuals who are symptomatic (and to a lesser extent, infected but not showing symptoms.) Food businesses should be following employee health policies and local health department recommendations to keep these individuals home.

Can I get sick with COVID-19 from touching food or packaging if the COVID-19 was present on it?

There is no indication that food packaging material has served in significant connection to virus transmission. If concerned, handling of food packaging can be followed with handwashing and/or using hand sanitizer.

How should produce be handled?

Consider using hand sanitizer before and after selecting produce items. Avoid touching multiple produce items when making selections. As per good food handling practices in general, wash hands before food preparation or eating, avoid touching the face and consider supplementing handwashing with the use of hand sanitizer.

What steps can I take to minimize risk when shopping at the grocery store?

Use hand sanitizer when entering stores, and wash hands and/or use sanitizer as soon as possible after leaving. Try to maintain social distancing as much as possible while shopping. Avoid touching surfaces or items unnecessarily and avoid touching your mouth, nose or face. Do not go shopping when showing symptoms or think you have been exposed to the virus.

What is my grocery store doing to minimize my risk?

Many stores are following CDC guidelines on cleaning and disinfection. Some are limiting hours to allow for additional cleaning and disinfection. Stores may also be providing hand sanitizer to customers and be asking sick employees or customers to leave.



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COVID-19 AND FOOD SAFETY FAQ

IS CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) A CONCERN WITH TAKEOUT?

By: NC STATE EXTENSION

CDC, FDA and USDA are not aware of any reports at this time that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. Current evidence shows the biggest risk of transmission of COVID-19 is being around individuals who are symptomatic (and to a lesser extent, infected but not showing symptoms.) Food businesses should be following employee health policies and health department recommendations to keep these individuals home.

What are the risks of takeout or drive-thru food?

There is no current indication that takeout or drive-thru meals will increase illness. This option is a good risk management choice, especially for high risk and elderly groups because it helps maintain social distancing and reduces the number of touch points.

What are the risks of food delivered to the home?

Similar to takeout food delivery helps maintain social distancing and reduces the number of touch points between preparation and serving the food.

Can I get COVID-19 from touching food or packaging exposed to COVID-19?

The risk of transfer of viruses is very low, based on current research. To further minimize risk, handling food packaging should be followed by handwashing and/or using hand sanitizer.

What happens in your body if you do ingest COVID-19 through food?

COVID-19 is generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. It may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose, but this is not thought to be the major way the virus is transmitted.

Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of the virus directly by eating food that might inadvertently contain virus.

In commercial food production, processing, and preparation, there are many best practices that are routinely followed as per federal, state, and local regulations. These are all designed to prevent foods from becoming contaminated with microbes from the environment, including viruses.

The best thing a consumer can do is to continue using good food safety practices before preparing or eating food, like always washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after using the restroom, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.



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