

COVID-19 and Food – Tips for the General Public

April 9, 2020

There is currently no evidence to suggest that food is a likely route of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, and there are currently no reported cases of COVID-19 transmission that have been linked to food. COVID-19 is [most commonly spread](#) from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets from a cough or sneeze
- Close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

It may be possible that a person could get COVID-19 by touching food or a surface that has the virus on it, but this is not the main way the virus is transmitted.

Viruses need a host cell to reproduce and cannot “grow” or multiply on food.

Coronaviruses are killed by common cleaning and disinfection methods and by cooking food to safe internal temperatures.

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 and Food

Can I get COVID-19 from food?

There is [currently no evidence](#) that the COVID-19 virus is spread through food. Previous outbreaks of other coronaviruses did not show that the virus could be spread through food.

How long could the COVID-19 virus stay on food?

There is limited evidence on how long the virus can stay on food. The virus survives longest on non-porous surfaces such as stainless steel and plastic.

Should I wear a mask when grocery shopping?

Medical masks (like N95 masks) must be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients. [Wearing a non-medical mask](#) (like a [homemade cloth mask](#)) has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. However, the use of a non-medical mask or facial covering can be an additional measure you can use to protect others around you, even if you have no symptoms. [Frequent hand washing](#) and [physical \(social\) distancing](#) are still needed to reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus. It is also important to be aware non-medical masks have [limitations](#) and you must ensure they are used [safely](#).

Who should go out for groceries?

Choose a person in good health to be the grocery shopper.

Do not go shopping if you:

- feel unwell or have any symptoms of illness
- have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or someone who is showing symptoms

Try to use online options for shopping and avoid going to stores if you are more vulnerable, which includes individuals:

- aged 65 and over, or
- with a compromised immune system, or
- with an underlying medical condition

How should I shop for groceries?

- Plan to buy enough food and supplies for two weeks to minimize trips out of the home.
- Bring disinfecting wipes to clean the handle of your cart and alcohol-based hand sanitizer to [sanitize your hands](#) before and after shopping.
- Practice [physical distancing](#) by keeping your distance throughout the store and also in line – many stores have marked out the 2-metre distance that is necessary.
- If possible, shop at less-busy stores where there are fewer customers to interact with and a lower risk of contaminated surfaces. Shop at off-peak hours to avoid crowds.
- Avoid touching your face as you select your groceries in the store and only touch the items you intend to buy.
- Use the self-checkout lane to reduce contact with others and bag your own groceries to minimize them being touched by others.
- Use a credit/debit card to pay to avoid handling cash.
- Wash reusable bags after each trip to the store.

What should I do when I get home from the grocery store?

- When you get home, [wash your hands well](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food packaging.
- [Clean and disinfect counters and other surfaces](#) you may have touched or used while putting groceries away.
- As a precaution, it is okay to clean non-porous cans and packaging with soap and water or a disinfectant wipe.

How should I clean produce after bringing it home?

Clean fruits and vegetables by scrubbing them under running water – even if you do not plan to eat the peel or skin. Any contamination on the peel can get inside fruits and vegetables when you cut or peel them.

Can I use Lysol wipes to wipe my fruits and vegetables?

Lysol wipes are used to disinfect surfaces and are not good to use on foods. The chemicals in the wipes should not be ingested.

What about eating with your hands?

You should always [clean your hands](#) before you eat, as well as before and during food preparation.

What are some general tips for cooking at home?

- Only prepare food for others when healthy. People who have any symptoms of illness, including cough, fever, shortness of breath, sneezing, vomiting or diarrhea should not handle food.
- [Wash hands](#) to reduce risk of illness. Always wash hands thoroughly before and during food preparation as you touch potentially contaminated surfaces (e.g. raw meat).
- Wash and scrub fruits and vegetables before cutting or eating.
- Thoroughly cook foods.
- [Clean and sanitize surfaces](#) that come into contact with food (e.g. cutting boards)

For more information on cleaning and cooking at home, visit our [Food Safety at Home](#) webpage.