

Food Safety Guidance during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Can I contract COVID-19 from food?

There is no current evidence that food or food packaging is associated with transmission of COVID-19. However, COVID-19 can survive on surfaces and objects, like other viruses. So, it is critical to follow the 4 key steps of food safety — clean, separate, cook, chill.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. It can spread between people who are physically close to one another, within 6 feet, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouth or nose of people nearby or be inhaled into the lungs. Therefore, social distancing of 6 feet or more is important to assist in minimizing virus spread. Click [here](#) for more details.

While surface-to-person spread is not believed to be the main way COVID-19 spreads, it is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching surfaces (or objects) where the virus is present and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. [Recent research](#) shows that the virus remains viable in the air and on hard surfaces for three hours and longer and is able to infect others.

How can we minimize risks?

Individuals ill with COVID-19 (or other illness) should be excluded from work activities that create unsanitary conditions (i.e. coughing or sneezing on produce).

Food producers, agriculture facilities, and restaurants (like other work establishments) need to follow protocols set by local and state health departments, which may vary depending on the amount of community spread of COVID-19 in a particular location. Coordination with local health officials for all businesses is vital.

All worksites and gatherings should avoid sharing food, allowing self-serve food, and buffet style food offerings.

Four Steps to Food Safety

Clean: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before, during and after handling food and produce, after coughing or sneezing, before eating, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, when hands are visibly dirty, handling animals and waste, smoking, or handling money.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counters with hot soapy water after food prep.
- Use paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, launder often in hot water.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush before produce is peeled or sliced.
- Clean lids before opening canned goods.

Separate: Separate Raw Meats from Other Foods

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your shopping carts, bags, and refrigerator.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.

Cook: Cook Foods to the Right Temperature

- Use a food thermometer to ensure the safety of meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs.
- Cook these foods to [safe temperatures](#).
- Reheat sauces, soups and gravy to a boil.

Chill: Refrigerate Foods Promptly

- Ensure fridge temperature is consistently 40° F or below and freezer temperature is 0° F or below.
- Refrigerate/freeze meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, and other perishables within 2 hours of cooking or purchasing.
- Refrigerate or freeze foods within 2 hours of purchasing or preparing.

Learn more about COVID-19 and ways to protect yourself, loved ones, and your community: Visit [California Department of Public Health COVID-19](#)