

# HOW SAFE IS MY FOOD

## In a COVID-19 World?

### CAN I GET CORONAVIRUS FROM FOOD OR FOOD PACKAGING?

The Food and Drug Administration reports there is no current evidence indicating food or food packaging can transmit the coronavirus.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Unlike foodborne related viruses, such as norovirus and hepatitis A, that cause gastrointestinal distress, the coronavirus affects the respiratory system.

The coronavirus is primarily spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land on people and surfaces nearby. If a person touches the surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their mouth, nose, or rubs their eyes, they may contract the virus.<sup>3</sup>

### HOW LONG DOES CORONAVIRUS SURVIVE?

Current research shows coronavirus can survive for up to three hours in the air, four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard, and two to three days on plastic and stainless steel.<sup>4</sup>

Making proper hand washing, social distancing, and routinely cleaning surface areas is critical to reducing the spread of the virus.

#### Clean these areas:

- Drawer pulls/door knobs
- Countertops/cupboards
- Oven and refrigeration knobs and handles
- Hand rails
- Faucets/toilet handles
- Electronics/remotes

### WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY SAFE AT HOME?

Harmful bacteria and viruses can survive in many places in and around the kitchen. Help your family stay safe by practicing these good food safety steps!

#### Wash Hands, Utensils, and Surfaces Often

- Hand washing is the best way to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. To ensure your food is safe, wash hands before, during, and after preparing.<sup>1,3</sup>
- Harmful bacteria and viruses can linger on everyday items in and around the kitchen. Washing cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops after each use with hot, soapy water will help prevent the spread of these harmful germs.
- Machine wash dishcloths often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

#### Wash Fruits and Vegetables

The USDA is specifically advising against the use of soap and other detergents and sanitizers to wash produce since detergents and sanitizers will absorb into produce, which may lead to health issues upon ingestion.<sup>1,3</sup>

- Washing fruit and vegetables will help prevent the spread of germs.
- Begin by cutting away any damaged or bruised areas, then rinse under running water **without** soap, bleach, or commercial produce washes.<sup>1</sup>
- Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush.
- Dry produce with a paper towel or clean cloth towel.

### HOW CAN I REDUCE THE RISK OF TAKEOUT OR HOME DELIVERY?

- Use no-touch or no-interaction deliveries and pickups. Have items left at the doorstep or curbside to limit the risk of spreading the virus.
- Wash your hands before and after handling the packaging.
- Remove food from takeout containers and place food on/in a clean plate/bowl.
- Immediately place takeout containers in the garbage.
- Wipe down surfaces food containers and bags were in contact with.
- Reheat food to 165°F degrees, even if it is already warm. This is the universal temperature to protect you from harmful bacteria and viruses.

#### REFERENCES:

1. **USDA:** Frequently Asked Questions: Food Access and Food Safety. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2020, from <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>
2. **Cornell University:** Frequently Asked Questions For the Food Industry. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2020, from <https://instituteoffoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/frequently-asked-questions/#covid-19-surface-survival>
3. **FDA:** Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions: Food Products. (n.d.). Retrieved March 2020, from <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food>
4. **National Institutes of Health:** New coronavirus stable for hours on surfaces. (2020, March 17). Retrieved March 27, 2020, from <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/new-coronavirus-stable-hours-surfaces>

#### CHECKOUT THESE VIDEOS

[How to wash cantaloupe](#) | [How to wash leafy greens](#) | [How to wash berries](#)

**I** ILLINOIS  
Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Learn More  
[extension.illinois.edu](https://extension.illinois.edu)

University of Illinois | U.S. Department of Agriculture | Local Extension Councils Cooperating  
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.