

Is Coronavirus a Concern at Grocery Stores?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (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 coronavirus was on it?

There is no indication that food packaging material has a significant connection to virus transmission. If you are concerned, wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer after handling food packaging.



How should I handle produce?

- 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 your face and consider supplementing hand-washing 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 (at least 6 feet) 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 if you 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 disinfecting. Some are limiting hours to allow for additional cleaning and disinfecting.
- Stores may also be providing sanitizer to customers and asking sick employees or customers to leave.

Source: North Carolina State University Extension

Shopping and Handling Groceries



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

- Use hand sanitizer when entering stores, and wash hands and/or use sanitizer after leaving.
- Wear a cloth face covering while shopping.
- Bring disinfecting wipes and use on cart and basket handles and card readers.
- Maintain social distancing while shopping and give others at least 6 feet of space.
- Only touch what you will buy. Avoid touching your mouth, nose or face.
- DO NOT go shopping when showing symptoms or think you have been exposed to the virus.



Is delivery a safer option than going to a store?

- Delivery or pre-order is a great risk management decision, especially for vulnerable individuals.
- Delivery helps limit the number of people in the store and helps with social distancing, as well as the number of people touching surfaces.
- Pre-order or delivery also prevents a shopper from inadvertently exposing others if they are infected but not showing symptoms.



Should produce be washed before eating? Should soap or disinfectant be used?

- Washing produce before eating is ALWAYS a good idea. Rinse with cool running water or soak in cool water right before eating.
- It is NOT recommended to wash produce with dish soap or any detergent.
- It is NOT recommended to treat produce with chemical disinfectants or wipes at home.



Should I only buy food that can be heated?

- There is no evidence that food is a transmission route for the virus.
- There is not current data about the temperature to inactivate the virus, so heating recommendations are not science-based.



How should I handle groceries for someone who is in a vulnerable population?

- If you are shopping for someone else, best practice is to drop off groceries while maintaining social distance of 6 feet.
- If you must enter a home to care for someone, wash your hands immediately upon arrival, while unpacking and before providing direct care.



How should I handle groceries when I get home? Can I bring them inside right away?

- There is no indication that food or food packaging material has served in significant connection to virus transmission.
- Handling of food packaging should be followed with hand-washing and/or hand sanitizer.
- It is NOT recommended to store groceries outside of the home, in cars or garages.

Source: North Carolina State University Extension