

Food Safety

Can I get sick with coronavirus COVID-19 from food?

Updated 03.15.2020

A: We are not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow [good hygiene practices](#) (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.

References

1. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food>
2. <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>
3. <https://www.idfa.org/coronavirus>
4. <https://www.wga.com/blog/covid-19-impact-food-supply-chain>

According to the World Health Organization, it is safe to receive packages from areas with known COVID – 19 illnesses.

5. Diversey

<https://diversey.com/en/blog/covid-19-outbreak-and-food-safety>

As of now, there's no evidence of COVID-19 transmission through food. Coronaviruses need a host (animal or human) to grow in and are not believed to grow in food.

Should we change our practices when handling food drive or donated food from retailers?

Updated 03.15.2020

We do not believe receiving practices for food drive or retail store donation need to change. There is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Coronaviruses historically have poor survivability on surfaces and the FDA and USDA indicate that there is no evidence of the virus being spread from handling food packages. Coronavirus is most likely to be spread via respiratory droplets. The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from close personal contact via respiratory droplets. Anyone handling, preparing and serving food should always follow safe food handling procedures and practice good personal hygiene.

References

1. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food>

2. <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>
3. <https://www.fmi.org/food-safety/food-safety-resources/backgrounders/background-information/food-safety-backgrounders/2020/01/28/coronavirus>

What recommendations are there for continuing operating procedures in the event that a volunteer or warehouse worker tests positive for COVID-19?

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If you have an employee or volunteer that test positive for COVID-19 you will need to immediately contact your local health department for guidance. The local health department will need to know who has had close contact with the COVID-19 positive person while they were at the food bank. It is important to note that COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and the main mode of transmission is through respiratory droplets (close personal contact) and not from touching inanimate objects such as food products. It is not necessary to recall or destroy food products that the worker may have handled.

References

1. <https://www.fmi.org/food-safety/food-safety-resources/backgrounders/background-information/food-safety-backgrounders/2020/01/28/coronavirus>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>
3. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/no-evidence-of-covid-19-transmission-through-food-says-efsa/>
4. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

Can COVID-19 spread from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects?

Updated 03.15.2020

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not believed to be the main way the virus spreads.

Reference:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>

What disinfectants will be effective against coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Updated 03.15.2020

It is safe to assume to date that COVID-19 has similar virulence on surfaces as other human coronaviruses. This is [a link to disinfectants that are effective on human coronavirus.](#)

References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
2. https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-01/documents/2018.04.01.list_d.pdf

What if a retailer reports an employee with a confirmed case of COVID-19?

Updated 03.15.2020

Should a store employee test positive for COVID-19, work with the retail store and local health department to determine the best course of action for future pick-ups. There is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread from close personal contact via respiratory droplets and is not contracted from consuming food or from handling packaged foods. Retailers are not recalling foods if they have a COVID-19 positive employee. The only exception is if the local or state health department requires action.

References

1. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food>

Can I accept fresh produce donated from a retail store even if they have identified an employee that tested positive for COVID-19?

Updated 03.15.2020

The short answer is yes. If produce was handled by someone with COVID-19 it does not need to be recalled or destroyed. Produce handling has not be identified as primary mode of transmission. Coronaviruses historically have poor survivability on surfaces and the FDA and USDA indicate that there is no evidence of the virus being spread from handling foods or food packages.

The Produce Marketing Association (PMA), United Fresh Association and FMI have released the following joint statement on the safety of produce during the global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"There are no clinically confirmed cases of COVID-19 linked to the consumption of fresh produce or food sold through traditional retail outlets. As consumers select their produce, adhering to food safety guidance is critical. We encourage consumers to wash their hands, and wash their produce just prior to preparing [following FDA recommendations](#)."

According to Amanda Deering, an Extension specialist in Purdue's Department of Food Science, current research indicates that the virus is not foodborne or transmitted by food.

“From all indications, the virus that causes COVID-19 appears to be transmitted just like other viruses,” Deering said. “This is very positive in that the same practices that we normally use to reduce contamination risk, such as washing your hands and washing fruit and vegetables before eating, should be applicable to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19.”

Scott Monroe, Purdue Extension food safety educator, points out that many produce growers already incorporate good agricultural practice that reduce the risk of contamination by a human pathogen.

“While viruses may be transmitted from surfaces, most growers take steps to prevent contamination. At this point in time, fear of COVID-19 should not be a reason to stop purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables,” he said.

References

1. <https://www.pma.com/content/press-releases/2020/coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>
2. <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2020/Q1/dont-fear-eating-your-fruits-and-veggies-as-virus-concerns-grip-nation.html>
3. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food>

Can COVID-19 (Coronavirus) be passed on through prepared foods?

Updated 03.15.2020

People are not infected with the virus through food. So, it is unlikely the virus is passed on through food and there is no evidence yet of this happening with COVID-19 (coronavirus) to date.

Coronaviruses need a host (animal or human) to grow in and cannot grow in prepared food. Thorough cooking is expected to kill the virus because we know that a heat treatment of at least 30min at 60°C is effective with SARS. Also, the COVID-19 virus is not able to survive in the stomach due to the high stomach acidity.

References

1. <https://www.fsai.ie/faq/coronavirus.html>
2. <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food>
3. <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>