

N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Food Safety – COVID-19

Per the CDC, coronaviruses are generally spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. This includes people who are in close contact with each other (within 6 feet) when droplets can land in the mouth or on the nose or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

According to CDC and FDA, currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. There is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19.

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 mouth, nose or possibly eyes. But this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

In general, because of poor survivability of coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely a very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated or frozen temperatures.

Frank Yiannas, FDA Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy and Response states:

“So, let me assure you first that the U.S. food supply remains safe for both people and animals. There is no evidence of human or animal food or food packaging being associated with transmission of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.”

Yiannas has also stated:

“I am aware that some processing plants closed when employees tested positive for COVID-19. However, because of the way the virus is transmitted, we do not anticipate that food products would need to be recalled or be withdrawn from the market if a person who works on a farm or in a food facility tests positive for COVID-19.”

FDA advises that we maintain everyday safe food handling and hygiene practices. Follow the 4 key steps of food safety – clean, separate, cook and chill.

Before preparing or eating food, wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds for general food safety.

Wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing or going to the bathroom.

Hand sanitizers are not intended to replace handwashing but may be used in addition to or in combination with proper handwashing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used if soap and water are not available.

Other food safety measures include:

1. Purchase food from reputable sources
2. Cook food thoroughly, maintain safe holding temperatures and chill promptly

3. Wash produce before consuming
4. Wash your hands after handling packaging, produce or meat products
5. Clean and sanitize surfaces and equipment

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/newsletter/food-safety-and-Coronavirus.html>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/fda-voices/fda-offers-assurance-about-food-safety-and-supply-people-and-animals-during-covid-19>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/conversations-experts-food-topics/fdas-perspective-food-safety-and-availability-during-and-beyond-covid-19>