

Myths and Facts About Food Safety and COVID-19

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Food, glorious food. Whether you're a natural-born chef or prefer the handiwork of professionals, you likely know that food safety is priority number one in the kitchen. With more of us home on the range due to COVID-19, food-related rumors abound. Which coronavirus concerns are half-baked, and which are true? Here, we looked to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the facts on food safety during this public health crisis.

Myth: You can get sick with COVID-19 if it's on food.

Fact: COVID-19 is not thought to be transmitted through food.

Although investigations are still underway, coronavirus isn't thought to be transmitted through food, like a [foodborne illness](#) can (think [salmonella](#) and [norovirus](#), for instance). Coronavirus is generally thought to be [spread](#) from person to person through respiratory droplets after an infected person sneezes or coughs.

Since the [CDC](#) and [FDA](#) say there's no evidence of COVID-19 being spread through food or food packaging, there are few concerns about possible supermarket or restaurant food contamination from the food itself.

The [CDC](#) does say, however, that it may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has coronavirus on it, and then touching your mouth, nose or possibly your eyes. In general, there is likely very low risk of spread from [food products or packaging](#).

Before eating takeout, delivered meals or grocery store food, take a minute to [prepare a safe food environment](#). The [CDC](#) recommends:

- [Cleaning surfaces](#) the food will touch — such as utensils, cutting boards and countertops — with hot, soapy water
- Rinsing fruits and vegetables under running water
- Thawing frozen food in the refrigerator
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before eating and after handling groceries, takeout containers or other food packaging

Don't let COVID-19 distract you from practicing basic food safety. Need a refresher? Here's [another helping](#) on the subject.

Myth: It's safe to go grocery shopping as long as you wear a face mask.

Fact: Wearing a face mask may not be enough to protect you from contracting coronavirus from other shoppers.

It's [true](#) that the [CDC](#) now recommends wearing a [cloth face covering](#) (mask) in places where social distancing is difficult to maintain, such as [grocery stores](#). But staying out of the store as much as possible is an even safer move. Coronavirus is [highly contagious](#).

The [CDC](#) recommends ordering food and other items online for home delivery or curbside pickup. If you must head to the grocery store or other stores selling household essentials, only go when you absolutely need to, and only if you're healthy.

If you can't skip the store, take these steps for safer shopping:

Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cough and sneeze into a tissue and throw the tissue away, or use the inside of your elbow. Then head to the restroom to wash your hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Wear a face mask, being careful to cover your mouth and nose. A simple homemade cloth face covering will do. The CDC offers [these instructions](#) for making your own, including a no-sew option.

Keep your distance. Try to stay at least six feet away from other shoppers. If an aisle is crowded, skip it; go to another one and come back when there are fewer people. If aisles have directional arrows, shop in the correct direction.

Load up your cart. Buy enough food to last [one or two weeks](#). Plan meals, consult recipes and make a detailed grocery list. That way, you'll know exactly what you need so you can spend less time shopping.

- You may need to shop more strategically than you have in the past. Check your refrigerator and pantry. Double or triple up on food you typically go through quickly, such as milk and bread
- In between shopping trips, [use what you have](#) and then make do. If you run out of something, put it on your shopping list for your next scheduled trip

Shop alone whenever possible. Many stores limits trips to one shopper. This is no time for a family excursion to the grocery store.

Shop at off-peak hours. Do your shopping when stores are [less crowded](#), such as early in the day or later in the evening. And if you're at [high risk for serious complications](#) from coronavirus, take advantage of stores offering special hours for high risk shoppers.

Use touchless payments whenever possible. If you have to handle cash, credit/debit cards or checks, or even touch a keypad, use sanitizer right after the transaction. Then wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water when you get home.

Wipe down your cart. Bring your own disinfectant wipes in case the store's supply, usually by the front entrance, has run out. [Wipe down the cart](#) handle and other frequently touched surfaces, such as touchpads.

More Food for Thought

If you're experiencing [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, [stay home](#) and shop online for home delivery or curbside pickup, or ask a friend or family member to shop for you.

Other options for food delivery that may help everyone stay out of the store include food subscription boxes of dairy, fresh produce and other groceries delivered to your doorstep. If you're new to cooking, consider meal kit delivery services, which mail recipes each week with the exact quantities of the ingredients you'll need to make them.

For perishable delivery foods, such as dairy, eggs or prepared meals, be sure to refrigerate or freeze them as soon as possible until you're ready to eat.

Myth: It's important to clean cans, bottles and other food containers before putting them away.

Fact: The CDC doesn't advise consumers to wash food containers. Instead, wash your hands often and follow food safety guidelines.

According to the [CDC](#), there isn't evidence that food or food packaging has been linked to getting sick from coronavirus. They do advise to use hand sanitizer after leaving the store. And when you get home, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.

The [FDA](#) says if you are concerned about contamination of food or food packaging, wash your hands in these instances:

- After handling food packaging
- After taking food out of the packaging
- Before preparing food for eating
- Before eating
- And when cooking at home, always follow [these four steps](#) to food safety from the CDC:
 1. Clean
 2. Separate
 3. Cook
 4. Chill

Myth: No-contact food delivery is just a creative way for restaurants, stores and other establishments to stay in business during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Fact: It isn't a gimmick. The CDC recommends accepting deliveries without in-person contact whenever possible.

When you order grocery deliveries or restaurant takeout, pay and tip online or over the phone when you place your order, if possible. Look for stores and restaurants offering [curbside pickup](#) — many will even pack your food or bags in your trunk for you, so you can stay safely in your car.

For deliveries, ask the driver to leave your food in a safe location, such as on your front porch or in your lobby, and alert you when it's ready for pickup. This option helps avoid any contact with the delivery person, which helps maintain [social distancing](#) to reduce the risk of spreading or contracting coronavirus.

If you must accept in-person deliveries, stay at least six feet away from the delivery person. After accepting your food delivery or picking up your carryout order and before eating, follow safe food handling practices by washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

We can't emphasize hand-washing enough. It's one of the most effective ways to reduce germ spread.

Myth: The empty shelves in my supermarket mean that COVID-19 is causing a food shortage.

Fact: Don't worry; there are no nationwide shortages of food.

As shoppers shift to dining at home more often, supermarkets are striving to meet increased demand. Although some shelves may look empty in response to increased demand, the low stock is temporary.

The [FDA](#) maintains that there are no nationwide shortages of food. Food production and manufacturing are widely dispersed throughout the United States and no widespread disruptions have been reported in the supply chain.

Get the Dish on COVID-19

Hungry for more information? Hop over to our blog posts [here](#) and [here](#) on other common myths and facts surrounding coronavirus.

AdventHealth is committed to continually serving up the latest information to keep you and your family healthy and safe during the pandemic. To stay up to date on COVID-19 and learn how to protect yourself or what to do if you or a loved one feels sick, visit our [Coronavirus Resource Hub](#).

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