



COVID-19 AND FOOD SAFETY FAQ

SHOPPING AND HANDLING GROCERIES

Current evidence shows the biggest risk of transmission of COVID-19 is being around individuals who have symptoms (and to a lesser extent, infected but not showing symptoms.) Grocery stores should be following employee health policies and health department recommendations to keep these individuals home.

SHOPPING

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 after leaving.
- Bring disinfecting wipes and use on cart and basket handles and card readers
- Maintain social distancing as much as possible while shopping and give others at least 6ft of space.
- Avoid touching surfaces or items unnecessarily and avoid touching your mouth, nose or face.
- **Do not go shopping when showing symptoms or 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 disinfection. Some are limiting hours to allow for additional cleaning and disinfection.
- Stores may also be providing hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes for carts or baskets, and may ask sick employees or customers to leave.

IS DELIVERY A SAFER OPTION THAN GOING TO THE 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 the shopper from inadvertently exposing others if they are infected but not showing symptoms

HOW SHOULD PRODUCE BE HANDLED?

- Consider using hand sanitizer before and after selecting produce items.
- Avoid touching multiple produce items when making selections.

HANDLING GROCERIES

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 handwashing and/or using hand sanitizer.
- It is **NOT** recommended to store groceries outside of the home, in cars or garages.

HOW SHOULD I HANDLE GROCERIES FOR SOMEONE WHO IS IN VULNERABLE POPULATION?

- If shopping for someone else, best practice is to drop off groceries while maintaining social distance.
- If entering a home to care for someone, wash hands immediately upon arrival, while unpacking and before providing direct care.

SHOULD PRODUCE BE WASHED BEFORE EATING? SHOULD SOAP OR A DISINFECTANT BE USED?

- Washing produce before eating is always a good idea.
- It is **NOT** recommended to wash produce with dish soap or any detergent.
- It is **NOT** recommended to treat produce with chemical disinfectants 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.

TIPS

1. Use hand sanitizer and cart wipes.
2. Shop alone and go with a plan.
3. Maintain social distance.
4. Only touch what you will buy.



For more info, visit: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

Contact: Elizabeth L. Andress, Ph.D.
University of Georgia
Professor and Extension Food Safety Specialist
Email: eandress@uga.edu
Updated March 31, 2020