

Food Safety and COVID-19: Tips for Keeping You Safe

You may have heard with the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that you should be washing your food with detergent, dish soap or even bleach to prevent you from getting the virus. Don't do that!

Here some facts you need to know about food safety and the coronavirus.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) stated that COVID-19 is not transmitted through food or food packaging. Although some diseases are spread through food, such as norovirus, COVID-19 is spread through human-to-human contact. This is why practicing social distancing is important. Keeping away from other people will lessen your chance of catching and transmitting the virus to others.

Even though COVID-19 is not transmitted through food, incorporating food safety practices into your everyday life still is important. The FDA's four key steps of food safety are clean, separate, cook and chill.

Clean:

- Always wash your hands before cleaning and preparing food. Wet your hands with warm water, use soap to scrub all over your hands and wrists for at least 20 seconds, rinse with warm water and dry with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- Do not wash meat. This can cause harmful bacteria to spray over other food and kitchen counters.
- Clean utensils, cutting boards and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- Rinse produce under cool running water. Gently rub to get rid of dirt and bacteria before cutting, peeling or preparing.
- Use a clean vegetable brush to scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumber.
- Dry produce with a clean cloth or paper towels to further reduce bacteria.

Separate:

- Do not cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from ready-to-eat foods such as cheese, deli meats, fruits and vegetables from the time of purchase to the time of consumption. Keep raw meats on the lowest shelves in the refrigerator and separate from all other foods. Be sure to use plates or containers to catch their juices.
- Use different cutting boards for different foods. For example, use one cutting board for meat, one for poultry, one for fresh produce and one for seafood. Tip: Use different-colored cutting boards for different foods (red for meat, yellow for chicken, blue for seafood, green for produce, white for fresh fish).
- Always clean your cutting boards, plates and utensils before reusing them for a different task.

Cook:

- Be sure to cook foods to the right temperature: 165 F for all poultry and for reheating foods (casseroles, fully cooked ham); 160 F for ground meats (beef,

pork) and egg dishes; 145 F for whole cuts of meat such as pork and ham (raw pork), beef, lamb, veal and fish; and 140 F for hot-holding dishes.

- When using a microwave, be sure to cover food, stir and rotate for even heating.

Chill:

- Do not let food sit for more than two hours in the “temperature danger zone” (40 F to 140 F).
- Keep your refrigerator below 40 F and the freezer below 0 F.
- Refrigerate perishable foods within two hours after preparation.
- Safely defrost food. Do not defrost food at room temperature. Defrost food in the refrigerator or the microwave, or under cool running water.

Remember: COVID-19 cases are not linked to food or food packaging. You do not need to use soaps, vinegar, detergents or bleach to clean your produce. Use the FDA’s four-step guide to food safety: clean, separate, cook and chill.

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Sources:

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