



Frequently Asked Questions COVID-19

Can coronavirus spread by foodborne routes?

Public health officials and academics agree that the coronavirus poses little danger from a foodborne illness perspective, right now, but some are maintaining a slight level of vagueness about the situation.

“While it is theoretically possible the virus could be transmitted via food, based on everything we know, the risk of foodborne transmission is dramatically smaller — perhaps by millions of times — than the risk by airborne droplets,” Donald W. Schaffner, extension specialist in food science and Distinguished Professor at Rutgers University, told **Food Safety News**.

Ben Chapman, professor and food safety specialist with the Department of Agricultural and Human Sciences at North Carolina State University agrees that the risk of foodborne transmission of the coronavirus — now sometimes being called COVID-19 — is low. It hasn’t been documented at all yet. But there are cross-contamination concerns.

“Since coronavirus is a respiratory virus we believe that it is contracted only by inhalation or similar mechanism (such as) sticking your finger in your nose, when your finger has a virus on it. If it was in food it would be destroyed by proper cooking,” Chapman told **Food Safety News**.

“Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food,” according to the CDC.

“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 thought to be the main way the virus spreads.”

There is a chance of cross contamination from hard surfaces such as door handles, cooking utensils, countertops and other items, but that danger is low, according to the CDC; “. . . because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely 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,” the CDC reports.

The World Health Organization reports there is not yet any evidence to support the theory that the virus is spread through food. Unlike some other viruses, such as norovirus and hepatitis A virus, the coronaviruses cannot grow in food, according to international public health officials. The coronavirus needs an animal host, which includes humans, to grow.

Recommendations for the single most effective weapon against the virus are a unanimous call for increased diligence in hand washing.

“The respiratory virus risk in restaurants is really more about being in the same location as a lot of people, some of who can be depositing the virus on surfaces like tables, doors, menus and managing that with a hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizer regime is an effective step to reduce risks of both COVID-19 and influenza,” said Chapman.

Full article here: <https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2020/03/experts-say-coronavirus-likely-not-spread-by-foodborne-routes/>

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Can COVID-19 Survive Freezing or Heating in the Environment or in Food?

Short Answer: Survive with heating? Depends. Survive with freezing? Likely. As Wolff states, "We are not aware of any published information on the survival of coronaviruses in food. Recent studies have shown SARS-CoV to survive in water to a very limited degree. There is no evidence to suggest the spread of coronaviruses through food or water."

We don't currently have much information regarding how freezing and heating may affect the SARS-Cov-2 virus (the virus that causes Covid-19). We do know that from studies of the SARS virus that caused an outbreak in 2003 that heat can inactivate the virus: Various references mention full inactivation of the SARS virus at 56C (133F) between 15 and 30 minutes. The same study that mentions 30 minutes inactivation also determined a positive correlation between time and temperature and found that the SARS virus was inactivated in 10 minutes at 68C (154.5F).

Freezing is a common method of preserving viruses in a laboratory setting and evidence from the WHO found the SARS virus can survive more than 21 days at 4C (39F) and -80C (-112F). Therefore, freezing is unlikely to inactivate the virus. When considering how the virus might survive in frozen foods, one needs to consider how food could potentially be contaminated in a food processing environment with the likelihood of direct contamination of food being very low.

Can you make hand sanitizer at home?

We are already finding shortages for hand sanitizer. To make your own sanitizer: mix isopropyl alcohol (70% or greater) with aloe vera gel.

How Long Can the COVID-19 Virus Survive on Surfaces?

While there are currently no COVID-19 specific studies for survivability on surfaces; studies have been conducted on similar coronaviruses that infect both humans and other animals. Kampf et al.'s (2020) review found that human-specific coronaviruses can remain infectious on surfaces between 2 hours to 9 days (at room temperature). Different materials and different temperatures can affect survivability and persistence of the virus.

Coronaviruses' ability to survive begins to decrease above 30°C. There are no 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.

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

It is safe to assume to date that COVID-19 has similar virulence on surfaces as other human coronaviruses. A list of disinfectants that are effective on human coronavirus: <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

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