CSEM Nutrition et services alimentaires
EMSB Nutrition and Food Services

COVID-19 and Food Safety

Food Safety Facts and FAQ

The current spread of the contagious COVID-19 virus is as a result of human to human transmission. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus by following the Quebec's health policies and recommendations to keep everyone safe. Refer to the **COVID-19 Self-Care Guide** (click here) issued by the Quebec government on how to protect yourself, your family and your community. More information on COVID-19 in Quebec available at Quebec.ca/coronavirus

The following are common frequently asked questions on COVID-19 and Food Safety. For a more extensive list on this topic and for more information, visit the MAPAQ website (French): www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca
or Click here for the English version of MAPAQ's FAQ, in PDF format.

Source: Adobe Stock,

Can the COVID-19 be transmitted through food?

- Currently, scientists and food safety authorities such as the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) and MAPAQ (ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec) have *no evidence to suggest the transmission of COVID-19 through food*. 'People are unlikely to be infected with the virus through food', as per the CFIA. COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, and not a foodborne illness, meaning is does not multiply on food like bacteria.
- Following *food safety guidelines and good hygiene practices* remain the recommendations for handling food. Visit Canada.ca/foodsafety for more information on food safety practices.

Should I wear gloves when I grocery shop?

- The coronavirus COVID-19 is *transmitted* by tiny droplets that are expelled into the air when an *infected person coughs or sneezes* and make their way into the respiratory system. It cannot be transmitted through the skin.
- Proper personal hygiene is key! Gloves give a "false sense of security" and proper handwashing is a far better precautionary measure.

Source: Getty images

Can I get COVID-19 by touching food packaging?

- According to the CFIA, there have been *no reported cases of food packaging being linked with the transmission of the COVID-19 virus*.
- According to MAPAQ, "although it is possible to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or an object where the virus is found and then by touching your mouth, nose or eyes, *this is not the primary means of transmission*".

Should I avoid buying unpackaged produce (lettuce, fresh herbs, fresh fruit and vegetables)?

- No. However, fruits and vegetables *must always be washed before eating*.
- With clean hands, wash and scrub all produce with water, as you would normally do.

Should I wash all packaged food items when I get home from the grocery store (eg. cereal boxes, pasta bags, and canned goods)?

- Because the virus can survive on surfaces for hours (> 3 hrs), **hand washing is the key** to avoid transmission in this scenario. **AVOID touching your face** (nose, eyes, mouth) and **WASH YOUR HANDS** as soon as you arrive home and after handling food packaging.
- For added precaution, **wash and disinfect** the surface you have set your food items on and **wash your hands** once you have stored your groceries.
- Therefore, **it is not necessary to wash all your purchases** however, if the use of disinfectant to wipe down food packages, the removal of items from boxes or using disposable bags is reassuring, continue to do so.

Can I still eat take out foods?

- Yes. As per CFIA, Coronaviruses are killed by cooking food to safe internal temperatures.
- Ensure that the restaurant you are ordering from has a good reputation for proper food handling techniques.
- Immediately remove food from the package and transfer onto a clean plate and wash hands before eating.

Recipe for Food Safety Habits

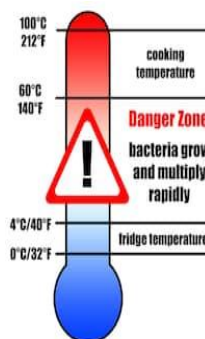**Practice good hygiene at ALL TIMES!**
Properly wash your hands with warm water and soap, rub and scrub nails for 20 seconds, dry with paper towel. Consider using a hand sanitizer.

Keep a clean kitchen at ALL TIMES!
Wash all equipment, utensils or counters that come in contact with food to prevent the contamination.

FOOD SAFETY - GENERAL RULE!
Keep food out of the **danger zone 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F)** where bacteria grow and multiply rapidly and cause foodborne illnesses.

✓ **Keep cold foods cold**; store in a refrigerator between 0°C (32°F) and 4°C (40°F).
✓ **Keep hot foods hot;** keep prepared hot foods above 60°C (140°F). Cook meats and poultry thoroughly.
✓ **Avoid cross-contamination between cooked or ready-to-eat foods and raw meats.**

References:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov   www.inspection.gc.ca/covid-19
www.healthcanada.ca   www.quebec.ca
www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Avis_Publicite/Pages/COVID-19_QuestionsReponses.aspx

March 31, 2020