

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN THE HOME DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Information Brief for Parents and Caregivers: UNPACKING AND COOKING FOOD

1. How should I care for food item brought home from a store?

Currently, the risk of getting COVID-19 from food is very low and there is no evidence to date confirming that COVID-19 can be spread through food. However, additional precautions may be considered during eating as it may be possible to catch the virus by touching a surface or object contaminated by the virus and then touching one's face.

Washing hands before and after unpacking foods is recommended. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand rub. Tips on how to properly wash or sanitize hands can be found on [Public Health Agency of Canada: Reduce the Spread of COVID-19 – Wash your Hands.](#)

When unpacking food items at home:

- Remove any unnecessary packaging and dispose into a waste bin with a lid.
- Packaging like cans can be wiped clean with a disinfectant before being opened or stored.
- Wash unpackaged produce, such as fruit and vegetables, thoroughly under running water. Do not add soap, as it can cause stomach upset, vomiting and/or diarrhea.

2. Should I prepare and cook food items differently during COVID-19 pandemic?

General food hygiene tips remain the same during COVID-19 pandemic, as currently there is no evidence to show that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food. Follow these food safety steps in your daily routine:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after preparing any food.
- Use separate cutting boards to prepare uncooked meat/fish/poultry and produce.
- Cook food to the recommended temperature. See **Appendix A** for recommended temperatures.
- Where possible, keep perishable items refrigerated or frozen, and pay attention to product expiry dates.
- Clean your kitchen countertops and surfaces (including **cutting boards** and **sinks**) before and after preparing food. It is advised to use paper towels, wipes or single-use cloths to avoid the risk of cross-contamination and the spread of bacteria/virus. To clean, use a kitchen sanitizer/disinfectant (as directed) or a bleach solution (5 millilitres, or mL, bleach to 750 mL of water). Rinse all items/surfaces/sinks carefully with water before cooking.
- Aim to recycle or dispose of food waste and packaging in an appropriate and sanitary manner, avoiding build-up of refuse which could attract pests.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before eating and make sure your children do the same.
- Always use clean utensils and plates.

References:

McGill Reporter: *COVID-19 Q&A: Jennifer Ronholm on staying safe while shopping for groceries.*
<https://reporter.mcgill.ca/covid-19-qa-jennifer-ronholm-on-staying-safe-while-shopping-for-groceries/>

UNICEF: *Easy, affordable and healthy eating tips during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.*
<https://uni.cf/3c5FebR>

UNICEF: *Cleaning and hygiene tips to help keep the COVID-19 virus out of your home.*
<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/cleaning-and-hygiene-tips-help-keep-coronavirus-covid-19-out-your-home>

Public Health Agency of Canada: *Reduce the Spread of COVID-19 – Wash your Hands.*
<https://bit.ly/39Xf4GC>

Government of Canada: *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Prevention and risks.*
<https://bit.ly/39SNI4o>

Safe Grocery Shopping: *U of G Expert Dispels Myths.*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snnpNx6gRIY&utm_source=guelphtoday.com&utm_campaign=guelphtoday.com&utm_medium=referral

Dietitians of Canada: *Advice for the general public about COVID-19.*
<https://www.dietitians.ca/News/2020/Advice-for-the-general-public-about-COVID-19>

Government of Canada: *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Prevention and Risks.*
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html>

Government of Canada: *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Food Safety.*
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-safety/covid19.html>

Appendix A

Temperature rules for safe cooking:

Meat, poultry, fish and eggs need to be heated to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying. Cook food until its inside temperature reaches a safe temperature and then continue cooking for at least 15 seconds.

Required Temperatures for different foods:

Whole Poultry (chicken, turkey, duck)	82°C (180°F)
Poultry Pieces (chicken, turkey, duck)	74°C (165°F)
Stuffing in poultry	74°C (165°F)
Beef, veal, lamb or goat (pieces and whole cuts)	Medium Rare: 63°C (145°F) Medium: 71°C (160°F) Well Done: 77°C (170°F)
Pork or fresh cured ham (pieces and whole cuts)	71°C (160°F)
Beef, veal, lamb and pork ground meat and meat mixtures (burgers, sausages, meatballs, meatloaf, casseroles)	71°C (160°F)
Ground poultry	74°C (165°F)
Pork (pieces and whole cuts)	71°C (160°F)
Seafoods (fish, shellfish and other seafood)	70°C (158°F)
Egg Dishes	74°C (165°F)
Food Mixtures containing poultry, eggs, meat or fish (soups, stews, casseroles, stocks, gravy)	74°C (165°F)
Leftovers	74°C (165°F)
Hot dogs	74°C (165°F)

Taken from Ministry of Health and Long-term Care:

<https://bit.ly/2xh9IJ5>

Additional information on food safety can be found on Government of Canada website:

<https://bit.ly/3aUSkbG>

If you have more questions about food safety during COVID-19 Pandemic, please contact: Olga Bondar, Health Promotion Consultant at o.bondar@healthnexus.ca