

Safety Tips for Grocery Shopping: The Expected New Normal for Consumers

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IN THIS FACT SHEET:

- Food and SARS-CoV-2
- Minimizing exposure to SARS-CoV-2 while shopping for groceries
- Expected new normal
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REMEMBER	CLEAN  Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.	SEPARATE  Separate: Keep raw meat and poultry separate from ready-to-eat foods.
	COOK  Cook: Cook foods to the proper internal temperature.	CHILL  Chill: Get leftovers to the fridge within 2 hours of being cooked.

Make Yourself a COVID-KIT Before Leaving to Get Groceries

- Face masks
- Disposable hand gloves
- Hand sanitizer
- Disinfectant spray or wipes
- Reusable shopping bag
- Paper or electronic list of things to purchase



Consumers all over the world are facing the threat from the highly virulent novel coronavirus that transmits from person to person and causes respiratory illnesses. Due to rapidly growing number of COVID-19 cases and in order to curtail its further spread, several countries, including the United States, and World Health Organization (WHO) have recommended implementing physical distancing.

Most food and related businesses are taking steps to adhere to state and local guidelines for keeping the food supply safe. Many precautions have been implemented by grocery stores, including requiring employees to follow strict hygienic practices. As a consumer, following a few tips can minimize your risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus responsible for COVID-19) while shopping for food.

At the Store

- Follow six feet physical distancing rule while waiting for the cart and shopping.
- Some stores may have a separate line of disinfected carts to pull from. If not, use disinfectant wipes or spray to sanitize the cart or basket handle.
- Be aware that grocery stores and farmers market have stopped food sampling. Let the farmer hand out the products to you in your shopping bag or crate.
- If you are using the self-checkout option, wipe down the barcode scanner, touch screen monitor and keypad using a disinfectant before use.

Always remember to sanitize your hands before touching anything in your car, such as the door handle, seat belt, keys, engine start button, radio button, gear stick, etc.

Alternatives to In-Store Grocery Shopping

- Thanks to e-commerce, pick-up and delivery options are available at most grocery store locations and restaurants.
- This option potentially reduces the risk of exposure and transmission with minimum or no contact between people.
- Pre-order and pre-pay online. Food delivered to your car or at your doorstep minimizes the risk of exposure and burden on in-store traffic. Most grocery stores and farmers markets offer this service.
- It has been reported that coronavirus can remain viable for up to 24 hours on cardboard boxes. Once the delivery is received, remove the contents from its original packing and wash the fresh produce according to the general food safety guidelines and store in clean containers or reusable refrigerator bags. As an extra precaution, wipe down the packaging for meat, dairy and other supplies with a disinfectant wipe and let it air dry. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- If ordering meals from outside, discard the meal packaging after transferring the contents into bowls or plates. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before eating.
- Shop at local farmers markets that are hosted in open spaces, allowing more physical distancing.



If you like shopping in store and want to minimize the time you spend in the store, have a visual plan. Also, download the store app or go to their website. Select the store you are going to be shopping at. Start adding the items you want to purchase in the cart. You will see an aisle number next to the item. Make a note. When you are in the store, navigate yourself directly to the aisle in which your products are available.

SARS-CoV-2 can survive on cardboard surfaces for 24 hours, 72 hours on plastic and stainless-steel surfaces and for 4 hours on copper surfaces under laboratory conditions. However, presently, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and WHO have concluded that there is no evidence of transmission of COVID-19 from food or food packaging. Thus, risk of acquiring SARS-CoV-2 from food packaging is very low.

AT Home

Once at home, wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

Wash the fresh produce according to the general food safety guidelines and store in clean containers or reusable refrigerator bags. As an extra precaution, wipe down the packaging of your purchased supplies with a disinfectant and let it air dry.

Disinfect all counter and sink surfaces after storing the items. Clean your shopping bag for use on your next grocery trip. For more information, click on the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's guidelines for **Cleaning and Disinfecting Households**.

Wipe down the doorknobs, garage door openers and light switches with a disinfectant after you have put the groceries away.

Also, wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water after handling and storing the purchased items.



TAKEAWAY FOR THE EXPECTED NEW NORMAL, WHETHER SHOPPING IN-STORE OR AT A LOCAL FARMERS MARKET

- ✓ Always have your COVID-KIT ready when leaving from home.
- ✓ Always maintain six feet of distance between you and others.
- ✓ Always put a face cover or mask on. Some stores will require shoppers to wear a mask.
- ✓ Remember! Wearing disposable gloves is not an alternative to thoroughly washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. One must wash their hands before putting on gloves as well as after disposing them.
- ✓ When exiting a grocery store or before entering your car, make sure to dispose of your gloves appropriately in the trash and use a hand sanitizer to sanitize your hands.
- ✓ Maintain a clean reusable shopping bag for groceries.
- ✓ Choose non-rush days and hours to shop for groceries and supplies.
- ✓ Organize your shopping list into categories: fresh produce, bakery, dairy, meat and eggs, supplies, refrigerated foods. This saves time in the store and reduces the risk of exposure.
- ✓ Shop patiently and be considerate of staff and other shoppers. Buy one-to-two weeks' worth groceries. Do not hoard items. The FDA has clearly ruled out a food supply shortage in the United States.
- ✓ Cell phones must be treated as a third hand. Disinfect and clean your cell phone as many times as you wash your hands.
- ✓ Periodically, using disinfectant wipes, wipe down the frequently touched areas of the interior of the car, doorknobs, light switches and other frequently touched items.
- ✓ Consider using preorder and prepay options for shopping in stores or farmers markets.
- ✓ Stay home and informed using reliable sources for COVID-19 information and updates in your state.
- ✓ For additional information, click on the links below:
 - Cleaning and Disinfecting Households
 - Grocery Signage for Customers
 - Food Safety and Coronavirus
 - Latest updates in Kentucky
 - Report on-compliance to COVID guidelines in Kentucky
 - Tips for Families Eating Out on a Limited Budget

Sources:

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<https://www.fda.gov/food/conversations-experts-food-topics/fdas-perspective-food-safety-and-availability-during-and-beyond-covid-19>

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