

Rutgers School of Health Professions
Department of Clinical and Preventive Nutrition Sciences
COVID-19 - Nutrition Resources April 2020

FOOD SAFETY

Can COVID-19 be spread through meal delivery, takeout food or groceries?

Concerns about the spread of COVID-19 through food packaging come from reports suggesting that the virus can survive on cardboard and plastic for 24 to 72 hours.¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread through food or food containers.¹⁻⁴ Since the virus is primarily spread through close contact, you should practice social distancing when ordering meals or having them delivered.⁴ You can choose request that the person delivering your meal leave it on your porch or doorstep. As an additional precaution, you can remove the food from its packaging, and transfer it to a clean plate.⁵ After recycling or disposing of the packaging, wash your hands (at least 20 seconds, with soap and water) before enjoying your meal.⁵

You can also protect yourself through proper hygiene. This means frequent hand-washing, sanitizing surfaces for food preparation, and following the four basic steps for food safety ([clean, separate, cook and chill](#)).⁶

How can I protect myself when grocery shopping?

The biggest risk with COVID-19 is the people you may come in contact with, not the groceries.¹ One option is to avoid crowds altogether by having groceries delivered to your home instead of going to the store. Check with your local grocery store to see if delivery is an option. As with meal delivery, many stores are providing the option for an unattended delivery left on your doorstep.

If you must visit the store, there are some simple precautions you can take. Focus on limiting your time at the store, keeping your distance from others and minimizing any personal contact.⁷ Prepare ahead of time by reviewing the items you need and meals you plan to cook, and come up with a list of items you plan to purchase.⁷ Try to shop at a store that limits the number of customers allowed to shop at one time. Sanitize your hands and the handles of the cart or basket you're using--many stores provide wipes or hand-sanitizer for this purpose.⁷ If you have gloves, wear them. When you get home, wash your hands thoroughly. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running water.⁷

Resources for Food Safety Guidance

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Resources:

- [Getting Groceries During Quarantine](#)
- [Food Storage Safety Tips for the Cupboard](#)
- [Should You Wash All Food?](#)
- [Tips for Ordering Takeout or Delivery](#)

American Heart Association:

- [COVID-19 Resources](#)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- [Food Safety and Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Food Safety and Availability During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

Harvard School of Public Health:

- [Food safety, nutrition, and wellness during COVID-19](#)

Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)

- [Food safety and COVID-19](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):

- [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

World Health Organization (WHO):

- [COVID-19 and Food Safety](#)

DIET, SUPPLEMENTS AND IMMUNE FUNCTION:

Can I boost my immune system with diet or supplements?

A healthy, well-balanced diet with nutritious foods supported by physical activity and stress management can help keep your immune system running properly.⁸ Many fruits, vegetables and whole grains contain vitamins and minerals that help your immune system function properly.⁸

While dietary supplements may claim to help boost immune function, there are no vitamins, minerals or herbs that have been shown to prevent or treat COVID-19.⁹ There are some dietary supplements may interfere with the absorption of some over the counter and prescription medications.¹⁰ It is important to talk to your primary care provider or a registered dietitian nutritionist before starting any supplements. Remember that while you can support your immune system through a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, keeping stress levels down, and staying active, your best defense against COVID-19 is maintaining social distance and practicing good hand-hygiene.^{8,9}

Resources for Nutrition for Wellness and Immune Function

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

- [How to Keep Your Immune System Healthy](#)

The American Society for Nutrition:

- [Making Health and Nutrition a Priority During the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

Harvard School of Public Health:

- [Ask the Expert: The role of diet and nutritional supplements during COVID-19](#)
- [Eating during COVID-19: Improve your mood and lower stress](#)

Healthline:

- [Can Supplements Fight COVID-19? 15 Immune Boosters](#)

NIH National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health:

- [Coronavirus and “Alternative” Treatments](#)

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

- [Dietary Supplements: What You Need to Know](#)

MEAL PLANNING AND RECIPES

Should I stock up on grocery items?

If you are looking to extend the amount of time between visits to the grocery store, consider stocking up on shelf-stable non-perishable foods or looking for items you already have in your pantry or kitchen cabinets. Non-perishable foods have an extended shelf life and can be stored without refrigeration, such as canned or dried foods.¹¹ While some may think of shelf-stable foods as processed foods, there are some healthy non-perishables such as whole grains, dried or canned beans, canned vegetables, nuts and seeds and dried/freeze-dried or canned fruits.¹¹ While some canned or packaged foods can be high in sodium or sugar, there are healthier options. Choose low sodium or no added salt varieties of pre-packaged foods, and rinse canned beans to reduce their sodium content.¹² You can find fruit in cans or cups in its own juice or sugar free juices, or look for dried fruit without added sugar.¹²

Resources for Healthy Meal Planning

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Resources:

- [Are Canned Foods Nutritious?](#)

ChooseMyPlate.gov:

- [Start Simple with MyPlate: Food Planning During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

Department of Homeland Security:

- [Emergency Food Supplies](#)

Healthline:

- [12 of the Best Non-Perishable Foods](#)

Healthy Kids:

- [Kid Friendly Kitchen Tasks Infographic](#)
- [Mayo Clinic: How to talk to your kids about COVID-19](#)

Rutgers Resources:

- [Rutgers Food, Nutrition, Health, and Wellness Resources](#)

Unicef:

- [Easy, affordable and healthy eating tips during the coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [Ideas to help your family maintain a nutritious diet.](#)

USDA SNAP:

- [Seasonal Produce](#)

Healthy Recipe Resources

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Resources:

- [Recipes](#)

American Heart Association:

- [Black Bean Salad/Salsa](#)
- [Berry Nuts Granola Bars](#)
- [Chunky Marinara with Pasta & Seared Chicken](#)
- [Hummus](#)
- [Slow Cooker Turkey and Black Bean Chili or Vegetarian 3-Bean Chili](#)
- [Tuna Stir Fry](#)

Feeding America:

- [Healthy, Low Cost Recipes](#)

Healthy Kids:

- [Super Healthy Kids Recipes](#)

UC Davis Integrated Medicine:

- [Chickpea Poppers](#)
- [Mix and Match Trail Mix](#)

USDA SNAP:

- [SNAP Recipes](#)

Community Resources for Food Access

If you need assistance with accessing food, there are local programs and resources that can help:

Community Food Bank of New Jersey

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Updates and Information](#)
- [Find Local Food Resources](#)

Official Site of the State of New Jersey:

- [Department of Human Services: NJ SNAP](#)

New Jersey COVID-19 Information Hub

- [How to Apply for Food Assistance \(SNAP, WIC\)](#)

New Jersey 2-1-1

- [Information on Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens](#)
- You can also dial 211 to get information on assistance for basic needs

New Jersey Department of Agriculture

- [Emergency Food Bank Contact Information by County](#)

The New York Academy of Medicine:

- [Government and Community Resources for Food Access](#)

Rutgers Resources:

- [Rutgers Food Pantry](#)

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