

Shopping and Handling Groceries

Current evidence shows the biggest risk of transmission of COVID-19 is being around individuals who have symptoms (and to a lesser extent, infected but not showing symptoms.) Grocery stores should be following employee health policies and health department recommendations to keep these individuals home.

Shopping

What steps can I take to minimize risk when shopping at the grocery store?

- Use hand sanitizer when entering stores, and wash hands and/or use sanitizer after leaving.
- Wear a cloth face covering while shopping.
- Bring disinfecting wipes and use on cart and basket handles and card readers.
- Maintain social distancing as much as possible while shopping and give others at least 6 feet of space.
- Avoid touching surfaces or items unnecessarily and avoid touching your mouth, nose or face.
- **Do not go shopping when showing symptoms or think you have been exposed to the virus.**

What is my grocery store doing to minimize my risk?

- Many stores are following CDC guidelines on cleaning and disinfection. Some are limiting hours to allow for additional cleaning and disinfection.
- Stores may also be providing hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes for carts or baskets, and may ask sick employees or customers to leave.
- Grocery employees are essential employees and encouraged to wear cloth face coverings.
- Stores may also limit the number of people allowed to shop at one time, and enforce physical distancing while in line inside and outside the store.

Is delivery a safer option than going to a store?

- Delivery or pre-order is a great risk management decision, especially for vulnerable individuals.
- Delivery helps limit the number of people in the store and helps with social distancing, as well as the number of people touching surfaces.
- Pre-order or delivery also prevents the shopper from inadvertently exposing others if they are infected but not showing symptoms

How should produce be handled?

- Consider using hand sanitizer before and after selecting produce items.
- Avoid touching multiple produce items when making selections.

Handling groceries

How should I handle groceries when I get home? Can I bring them inside right away?

- There is no indication that food or food packaging material has served in significant connection to virus transmission.
- Handling of food packaging should be followed with handwashing and/or using hand sanitizer.
- It is **NOT** recommended to store groceries outside of the home, in cars or garages.

How should I handle groceries for someone who is in vulnerable population?

- If shopping for someone else, best practice is to drop off groceries while maintaining social distance.
- If entering a home to care for someone, wash hands immediately upon arrival, while unpacking and before providing direct care.

Should produce be washed before eating? Should soap or a disinfectant be used?

- Washing produce before eating is always a good idea. Rinse with cool running water or soak in cool water right before eating.
- It is **NOT** recommended to wash produce with dish soap or any detergent.
- It is **NOT** recommended to treat produce with chemical disinfectants or wipes at home.

Should I only buy food that can be heated?

- There is no evidence that food is a transmission route for the virus.
- There is not current data about the temperature to inactivate the virus, so heating recommendations are not science-based.

Tips

1. Use hand sanitizer and cart wipes.
2. Shop alone and go with a plan.
3. Maintain social distance.
4. Only touch what you will buy.

For more information, visit:

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

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<http://go.ncsu.edu/covid-19>

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