

Island Health - Aboriginal Health Dietitians

COVID-19 & FOOD SAFETY

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There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted by eating food that may have been contaminated with the virus, however, it is important to wash your hands before preparing or eating food.

Does cooking kill the COVID-19 virus?

Normal cooking temperatures for foods will kill COVID-19 and other bacteria in food. It is best to always use a thermometer to check that the internal temperature of the food has reached 74°C.

Does the COVID-19 virus grow on food? Should I be concerned about storing foods in my cupboard, fridge, or freezer?

COVID-19 is a virus and does not grow. It may survive in foods and on surfaces for a few hours to a few days before it dies. However, it is not believed that the virus is transmitted by eating contaminated food.

The virus is [transmitted by droplets](#) spread from a sick person when they cough or sneeze. If the COVID-19 virus is on the surface of a food and stored in a cupboard, fridge, or freezer, there is no evidence that it can grow or multiply further. It is not known if COVID-19 can survive refrigerator or freezer

temperatures. While there are no special precautions needed when storing food, it's best to wash your hands after putting away groceries, and before chopping and cooking food.

Can the COVID-19 virus be passed on by eating or touching ready to eat foods made by others?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through food made by infected people. COVID-19 is spread from person-to-person by coughing or sneezing. It is possible that a person infected with COVID-19 could spread the virus by sneezing on food or by directly touching food with their hands. However, there have been no cases reported of such transmission with COVID-19. To be safe, if you are sick with COVID-19, do not prepare or handle food for others.

Use good hygiene practices when handling food. Avoid bare hand contact. For example, use utensils, napkins, or gloves to handle food. We recommend frequent hand washing with plain soap and water to reduce risk of transmission if you are preparing foods.

When handling foods at home, make sure to **wash your hands** with soap and water for 20 seconds:

- Before, during and after preparing foods,
- After handling any raw foods,
- Before eating foods,
- After using the washroom
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing your nose

Can COVID-19 be passed on by eating raw fruits and vegetables, packaged foods, or meat?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through eating or touching raw fruits or vegetables. When preparing fresh fruits and vegetables, wash or scrub them under cold, running, potable tap water prior to eating. Currently, there have been no reported cases of food or food packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19, and no reports of livestock being infected or sick with COVID-19.

Prevent cross contamination by

- keeping fruits and vegetables separate from raw foods
- at the grocery store, only handle (touch) the fresh fruits and vegetables that you plan to buy (as a courtesy to other customers) and to limit any hand transfer of germs
- do not hunt, fish, or gather plant medicines for others when you are sick, and when you are well, use hand sanitizer or carry a container of soapy water and wash hands often during the process

Resources

BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/food-safety>

Canadian Food Inspection Agency: <https://www.inspection.gc.ca/covid-19/questions-and-answers/eng/1584648921808/1584648922156>