



Tips for keeping yourself infection free while shopping for groceries during the COVID-19 crisis

Authored by Carlin Rafie, Assistant Professor and Extension Human Nutrition Specialist, Department of Human Nutrition, Food, and Exercise, Virginia Tech

Is it safe to go into supermarkets?

The need to purchase food has made going to the supermarket a necessity, even though they are not the safest places to be during the COVID-19 crisis. There are some practical steps that you can take, however, to avoid contracting the virus, or transmitting the virus if you are infected and do not yet know it. The first step for successful prevention is to know how you can get infected by the virus.

How can you get infected with COVID-19 in a supermarket?

You can be infected by the virus either by breathing in air that contains the virus, or getting the virus on your face through droplets produced when a person with the virus coughs or from your hands (with or without gloves) when you touch your face. The virus enters your body through your eyes, nose or mouth. (Harvard Publishing, 2020)

The virus can remain infectious for hours when it is in droplets in the air, and for days when it is on a surface, depending on the surface. It can survive up to three days on plastic and steel, and up to 24 hours on cardboard. (van Doremalen, 2020) The Food and Drug Administration indicates there is currently no evidence of transmission of the virus through food or food packaging. With this information in hand, here are some practical guidelines on how to shop at the supermarket, and be safe from infection by COVID 19.

Steps for staying safe in the supermarket

- ✚ Go shopping at times when it is less busy if possible. Try to purchase enough groceries for two weeks, so that you need to go less often.
- ✚ Bring a hand sanitizer (wipes or liquids) that contains at least 60% alcohol to the grocery store. Sanitize your hands, and the grocery cart handle upon entering the store.
- ✚ Avoid handling products that you do not intend to purchase. Select produce after visual, rather than hands on, inspection.
- ✚ Maintain a distance of six feet from others to avoid air transmission of the virus. An average shopping cart is 3 feet long, so a two-cart distance is 6 feet.
- ✚ When shopping, do not crowd around product shelves. Allow people time to finish their product selection before approaching. Avoid passing patrons in aisles if possible in order to maintain a 6-foot distance.
- ✚ The CDC recommends that people use a cloth face covering when in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult. People can make cloth coverings from common household items. Find a simple video that shows you how [here](#), and continue to follow the CDC for updates on recommendations. (CDC, 2020)

- ✚ If you are 65 or older, ask others around you to do grocery shopping for you if possible. If that is not possible, contact your grocery stores to see if they are offering special hours for older adults. If you have family or friends older than 65 years of age, offer to do their grocery shopping for them.

Additional Resources

The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America – 30 Days to Slow the Spread,
https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf

EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the Cause of COVID-19,
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID 19),
<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

References

Harvard Health Publishing, (n.a.), COVID-19 Basics, updated April 6, 2020. Accessed on April 6, 2020. Available at:
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-basics>

van Doremalen, Neeltje, Trenton Bushmaker, Dylan H. Morris, Myndi G. Holbrook, Amandine Gamble, Brandi N. Williamson, Azaibi Tamin, et al. 2020. "Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1." *N Engl J Med*.

CDC, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Recommendations for Cloth Face Covers. Revised April 3, 2020. Accessed on April 6, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html#studies>

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2020

HNFE-919NP