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## Grocery Shopping and Coronavirus

Many people have questions about shopping for produce during this pandemic. This newsletter will address the following:

- Is it safe to buy and consume fresh "open" (non-packaged) produce and vegetables?
- Should I take any specific precautions?
- Should I be worried that people infected with Coronavirus have touched products in the grocery store?

## Fresh Produce

You are better off buying fresh produce in one store rather than shopping at 3 stores to find frozen fruit. All food safety experts consider the risk of acquiring Coronavirus through handling fresh produce extremely low. Also, there is no evidence that Coronavirus can be transmitted through consumption of contaminated foods. The main risk would be transmission of Coronavirus from contaminated surfaces (such as the outside of a pear) to hands and from there to nose and eyes.

Managing this risk can be accomplished with 4 simple steps:

- ☒ Washing hands after returning from shopping
- ☒ Frequently washing hands during food preparation
- ☒ Rinsing the outside of fruits and vegetables with water
- ☒ Removing outer surfaces (e.g., outer lettuce leaves) before consumption

These are all practices that food safety experts have followed, even before Coronavirus, as these practices also reduce the risks of foodborne illnesses.



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## Fresh Produce *(continued)*

Going too far in trying to reduce an already low risk, can lead to other risks that are also important to understand. The following are **DO NOTs** the experts recommend:

- **DO NOT** stop eating fresh fruits and vegetables. They provide considerable nutritional benefits that help maintain personal health and hence enhance the ability to fight off infections.
- **DO NOT** wash your fruits and vegetables in soap, sanitizer, disinfectant, acid, or any other chemical.
- **DO NOT** mix different sanitizers, disinfectants, acids or other chemicals, as their inappropriate use can create other health hazards.
- **DO NOT** wash produce in sinks that may have been exposed to raw products (e.g., raw eggs, raw meat), as this can lead to cross-contamination with microbes that can cause foodborne illness, such as Salmonella. \*

\* Clean sink and SANITIZE SURFACES as an extra precaution to kill germs. Use a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach and 1 gallon of water. Apply to surfaces that foods will come in contact with, and allow to stand for several minutes. Pat dry with fresh paper towels.

## After Grocery Shopping

While Coronavirus is not considered foodborne, there are some practices you should use to reduce the already small risk of transmission of Coronavirus through surfaces.

### When you come home from shopping:

- ★ Place the shopping bags on the floor and *first wash your hands*.
- ★ Afterwards, remove the food from the shopping bags, discard or recycle single use bags, or put away reusable bags; there is no need to discard or sanitize any part of food packaging.



- ★ *Wash your hands again after food has been stored away before touching your face or the food.*
- ★ If the shopping bag touched the counter or a surface, clean the surface with a sanitizing wipe or solution.

### Remember to:

- Practice social distancing
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water