

Food Safety in the Time of COVID19

COVID19, commonly known as coronavirus, is a **respiratory virus**. While COVID19 is **not considered to be a foodborne** illness by the **Centers for Disease Control**, it is contagious. Actions that you can take to prevent foodborne illness can be taken to mitigate coronavirus.

Of the food safety steps in helping to mitigate coronavirus, **cleaning** is the most important; **cleaning hands** and **cleaning surfaces**. **Avoiding contact** with others while sick is also important.

WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY AND THOROUGHLY WITH SOAP AND WATER.

There are 5 easy steps:

1. **Wet hands** with warm running water and apply soap.
2. **Rub hands** together to make a lather.
3. Continue rubbing hands for at least **20 seconds**.
4. **Rinse hands** well under running water.
5. **Dry hands** using a paper towel or a clean cloth.

Research has shown that washing hands with soap and water is the best defense against the flu and other contagious illnesses.

When should you wash your hands? There are many times throughout the day, including:

- Before and after eating food or putting your hands to your mouth or face
- Before, during and after preparing food for yourself and others
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- After using the toilet or assisting others in the bathroom
- After changing diapers or helping a child with toilet or personal hygiene
- After touching garbage
- After touching an animal or animal waste

Check out this [video from the CDC](#) that gives all the basics.

What about hand sanitizer? Hand sanitizer is a good **back-up** if running water is not available. Your hand sanitizer product should be at least 60% alcohol content. Apply hand sanitizer to hands, and rub hands together for 20 seconds until hand surfaces (tops and palms) and fingers are dry.

Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs, but:

- Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs.
- Hand sanitizers may not be effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

Hand washing using plain soap and water, with lots of scrubbing, lifts germs and harmful bacteria off hands and washes them away (down the drain)!



Remember to **stay home** if you have an illness or suspect that you might!

ROUTINE CLEANING AND SANITIZING OF KITCHEN SURFACES.

Routine cleaning and sanitizing are important; use this three-step process.

1. **CLEAN SURFACES** like kitchen and bathroom countertops with **warm water and soap** to remove germs, dirt, and food debris. Cleaning does not kill germs, but it removes them and lowers the risk of spreading infection. Clean dishes, pots and pans, and utensils and other surfaces. A good physical cleaning that moves dirt and debris off surfaces is best. Scrub away!
2. **RINSE.** Using **warm** water, rinse away debris and rinse off soapy water, leaving behind a surface that is **clean**.
3. **SANITIZE. After cleaning,** sanitize surfaces as an extra precaution to kill germs that might remain. Sanitizing after cleaning, also be referred to as '**disinfecting**', is a **best practice** for prevention of COVID-19 and helps to stop transmission of foodborne illness.

General recommendations for routine cleaning and disinfection of kitchen surfaces: at home or in the community.

- **Clean** with soap and warm water.
- **Rinse** with clean water.
- **Disinfect** with an EPA-registered cleaner (**follow label directions**), or use a **dilute** bleach solution specifically for **kitchens** (follow label directions for other areas like bathrooms):
 - **1 teaspoon bleach per quart of water**
 - **1 Tablespoon bleach per gallon of water**

Allow bleach solution to remain on clean surfaces for 1 minute. Then, wipe dry or (even better) allow to air dry. The chemicals will evaporate, leaving behind a sanitized surface.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING IN THE TIME OF ILLNESS.

There are **additional procedures** for cleaning and disinfecting in a home where a person has a suspected/confirmed case of illness.

- **Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and sanitizing.** Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and not used for any other purpose. Wash hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- **Wash surfaces** with soap and water. Always do this prior to disinfection.
- **Disinfect** with a **strong bleach solution**, a **70% alcohol** solution, or **EPA-registered** household disinfectant (follow label directions).
 - **Preparing a strong bleach solution for home-care settings (bathrooms, sick rooms, etc):**
 - 5 Tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of warm water
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of warm water
 - **Allow to air dry.**
 - **Rinse** surfaces, utensils, pots and pans treated with this strong bleach solution with **clean water** prior to contacting food (it is not necessary to rinse bathroom surfaces).

What about surfaces like doorknobs and handles where it might not work to clean and then disinfect? For frequently touched surfaces (tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, faucets.....) use standard household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants **following label instructions**. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product. More information [here](#) from the CDC.