Food Safety during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Preventing foodborne illness is more important than ever to avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare providers as well as to stay healthy.

According to the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service, there is currently no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19\(^1\). Like other viruses, it is possible that the virus that causes COVID-19 can survive on some surfaces or objects. For that reason, it is critical to follow the 4 key steps of food safety — clean, separate, cook, and chill outlined below.

As always, you should follow the 4 principles of food safety to prevent foodborne illness.

1. **Clean**: Wash hands, utensils and surfaces often. Germs can spread and survive in many places.
2. **Separate**: Raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can spread illness-causing bacteria to ready-to-eat foods, so keep them separate.
3. **Cook**: Food is safely cooked only when the internal temperature is high enough to kill germs that can make you sick.
4. **Chill**: Refrigerate promptly. Bacteria that cause food poisoning multiply quickest between 40°F and 140°F.

**Shelf life**

Many foods purchased at the grocery store include a date, which indicates when it should be used or sold by. Except for infant formula, dates are not an indicator of the product’s safety and are not required by Federal law. *Because these dates refer to the product’s quality, it doesn’t necessarily mean they should be thrown out.*

For products that don't require refrigeration until after opening, such as mustard, salad dressing and ketchup, it’s often safe to eat these beyond the date on their label as long as they have been stored properly.

When in doubt, check the USDA’s FoodKeeper App or website online [https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app](https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app) and discard any foods that have developed an off odor or texture.

More nutrition information can be found at [1](http://www.foodsafety.gov/) and [https://www.eatright.org/coronavirus](https://www.eatright.org/coronavirus)