Safe Food Practices during Coronavirus and Beyond

Can you catch coronavirus from food? It is not likely that you will be infected with this virus from food directly. There is a greater chance you might catch it from the variables that are involved with buying/receiving/preparation of food. Here are some tips for reducing your chances of becoming infected through the process of food consumption:

Assume everything and everyone you that come in contact with is potentially contaminated. Handle all items and people with care to protect yourself:

**Shop Safely**

Best practices for safe shopping:

* + - * before you leave for the store check for store hours operation- and if they have any restrictions on timing (senior hours?)
      * make a list on paper before you go, but plan on being flexible with purchases
      * pack disinfectant wipes in ziplock bag for cleaning shopping cart handles
      * take extra paper towel sheets for getting items off of shelves
      * keep your own hand sanitizer in your pocket for use at critical exposure times
      * have your credit card or cash ready for payment
      * let your eyes pick out items first- then grab what you want
      * utilize self checkout lines whenever available
      * clean fingers after using credit card keypad
      * ask if the cashier would mind sanitizing their hands with a squirt of your hand sanitizer
      * stay a safe distance of 6 feet from everyone in the market
      * use a face covering of a mask/bandana/ scarf while you are shopping
      * consider not using your reusable bags during pandemic (they must be washed after a trip to the store); instead pack food in store supplied bags:

refrigerator/freezer items together

dry boxes with canned goods

cleaning supplies with paper/plastics

* + - * buy enough food to last several weeks
      * take coat /shoes off outside of house if possible, and leave in a corner for 24 hours
      * when arriving back inside of your home, gel hands right before entering house

**Receive Safely**

Best practices when receiving delivery of food from restaurants or supermarkets:

* + - * prepay for any delivery
      * find out if you can include the tip in your payment
      * do not allow a delivery person in your house
      * ask for the food items to be left at the doorstep
      * assume the bags/supplies that are delivered have germs on the surface
      * decide if you can set aside a space in the garage/hall/closet that can be used as a temporary “holding space” for anything received- from UPS, Grocery delivery, or FedEx
      * if possible pull out the non-perishable items, leaving these for 2 days before unpacking
      * determine where you can unpack deliveries, knowing you should have a “soiled side” and then a “clean side”
      * use store-bought or homemade antimicrobial wipes to clean any jars/boxes/bags- and change the wipes between cleaning every 4-5 items
      * use the wipes on your hands frequently while unpacking
      * wash your hands using the 20 second method when all unpacking is done

**Handle Safely**

Best procedures for safe food prep and kitchen practices:

* + - * identify a counter/surface to place “contaminated” items, including packages, before these are cleaned
      * next identify a counter/surface nearby for “clean” items, including all the bags/boxes you have wiped down
      * if using material towels in your kitchen, change daily
      * preferably use paper towel for cleaning when using disinfectant
      * “sanitize” wet sponges by placing in boiling water or microwaving for 2 minutes
      * plan to clean “high touch” areas several time per day:

door knobs

refrigerator handle

dishwasher handle

microwave handle/keypad

toilet knobs

sink faucet handles

TV remotes

cell phones

* + - * wash as many kitchen items in the dishwasher as possible
      * remember all those rules about sanitizing your sink /cutting boards/ hands after handling potentially hazardous foods (see great links below)

**Helpful tips/resources/links:**

Plan your food supplies for longer term usage:

purchase long lasting fresh produce including:

carrots, parsnips

cabbage, fennel, brussels sprouts

onions, radishes, garlic

potatoes, sweet potatoes

winter squash (acorn, butternut types)

beets, turnips, rutabaga

apples, oranges

great shelf stable items:

milk (condensed, dried, or aseptic packed)

fish (tuna, salmon, sardines, mackerel)

beans (any kind will do)

pasta/noodles and jarred sauces

canned vegetables, canned fruit, dried fruit

nuts and nut butters

dairy items with long refrigeration life:

ultra-pasteurized milk (listed on the label)

hard cheeses

some yogurts

Resources:

* Safe food handling:
  + - <https://srhd.org/media/documents/FoodHandoutsCookingTemp201304.pdf>
    - <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/6c55c954-20a8-46fd-b617-ecffb4449062/Kitchen-Companion.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>
    - <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>
* Healthiest frozen meals:
  + - [https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/best-frozen-dinners#1](https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/best-frozen-dinners%231)
    - <https://www.cookinglight.com/eating-smart/healthiest-frozen-foods>
    - <https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/healthy-frozen-food-brands/>
    - .
* Further reading:
  + - <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/fda-voices-perspectives-fda-leadership-and-experts/fda-offers-assurance-about-food-safety-and-supply-people-and-animals-during-covid-19>
    - <https://drexel.edu/dontwashyourchicken/>
    - <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Danger_Zone.pdf>
    - <https://www.fightbac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/BFS_BROCHURE_Color.pdf>
    - <https://extension.psu.edu/coronavirus>
    - <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/index.html>

Please feel free to email Joan Katz, RD,LDN (registered dietitian, licensed in PA) at [joankatz.rd@gmail.com](mailto:joankatz.rd@gmail.com) with any food safety or nutrition questions.