



WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

FOR FOOD REGULATORS

On March 16, 2020, Gov. Eric J. Holcomb issued [Executive Order 20-04](#) announcing restaurants, bars, nightclubs and other establishments that provide in-dining services to close to in-person patrons through March 31, 2020. This was extended until April 6 through [Executive Order 20-14](#) and now includes not only interior dining areas, but also patios, outdoor seating areas and parking lots. The intent of the executive order is to keep people from congregating in a dining area. Retail food facilities may allow people to walk in to pick up food or have employees bring an order out to a vehicle. Lines of customers waiting for a takeout order should be discouraged and could be addressed by signage or employees promoting social distancing (staying at least six feet apart and/or no more than 10 people at a time). Jurisdictions and food businesses should work together to decide the most effective way to implement this executive order. Implementation should also take into consideration disease activity within the community.

Food industry is a part of the nation's critical infrastructure and food regulatory professionals should work with food industry partners to ensure they are able to remain in operation while adhering to the Governor's executive order. Information is rapidly evolving in regards to COVID-19 and information in this document may be subject to change.

CAN COVID-19 BE SPREAD THROUGH FOOD?

The CDC, FDA, and ISDH are not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow good hygiene practices (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.

HOW DO FOOD ESTABLISHMENT MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DISEASE?

Food employees should stay home when you are sick. Clean frequently touched surfaces using EPA-approved sanitizing solution and change it at least every four hours. Ensure dishwasher and/or three-compartment sinks are used properly and contain the appropriate level of sanitizer and/or water temperature for the final rinse. Until told otherwise, restrict dine-in and only offer food to patrons using drive thru, take-out, and delivery services. Restrict self-service options like buffets, salad bars, and provide prepackaged utensils.



TRANSMISSION THROUGH PACKAGING

The USDA is not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow good hygiene practices (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.

FRESH PRODUCE

According to the United Fresh Produce Association there are no clinically-confirmed cases of COVID-19 linked to the consumption of fresh produce or food sold through traditional retail outlets. As consumers select their produce, adhering to food safety guidance is critical. We encourage consumers to wash their hands, and wash and prepare their produce following FDA recommendations.

Farmers markets are considered essential and are permitted to continue operations under Gov. Eric J. Holcomb's executive order. Specifically, the order designates "certified farmers markets" as essential businesses. Operators are encouraged to follow the CDC guidance for social distancing of six feet.

FOOD PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Personal hygiene by food handlers and sanitation of food handling and serving services are both critically important for all food-related establishments. Sick personnel should never be allowed in food handling areas.

FOOD EMPLOYEE PERSONAL HYGIENE AND HEALTH

Public health officials say that asymptomatic infections, are highly probable. This means asymptomatic persons can be actively shedding the virus through coughs, sneezes and mucous, which can then contaminate foods and food handling surfaces.

Personnel exhibiting respiratory infection symptoms of any degree should be required to stay away from food products and work surfaces. Best practice is to send them home or tell them to stay home from work.

Currently, there are no approved vaccines or anti-viral drugs for COVID-19. Personnel who have recently traveled in affected areas or were around people suffering from respiratory infections should immediately contact a health professional for instructions

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE EVENT OF A BODY FLUID INCIDENT?

If a customer or employee vomits or has diarrhea, implement the same protocols used for Norovirus or Hepatitis A. Provide personal protective equipment and have the supplies needed for cleanup, including an approved disinfectant effective against viruses. The CDC recommends 1/3 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water for environmental cleaning after a body fluid incident.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD PROGRAM AVAILABILITY

The USDA is monitoring the COVID-19 situation closely in collaboration with federal and state partners. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service programs are ready to assist in the government-wide effort to ensure all Americans have access to food in times of need. In the event of an emergency or disaster situation, Food and Nutrition Service programs are just one part of a much larger government-wide coordinated response. All programs, including SNAP, WIC and the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, have flexibilities and contingencies built-in to allow to respond to on-the-ground realities and take action as directed by Congress.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General questions from the public or healthcare provider inquiries about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 24/7).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- USDA COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>
- United Fresh Produce Association webpage: <https://www.unitedfresh.org/coronavirus-fresh-produce-industry-resources>
- The Food Industry Association Preparedness Checklist: <https://www.fmi.org/food-safety/coronavirus>
- U.S. EPA 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