

# COVID-19 and food safety

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Social distancing, hand-washing not touching your face and disinfecting surfaces are some ways to avoid contracting SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. But what about the food you eat? Can you get sick with COVID-19 by eating contaminated fruits, vegetables or other foods?

Dr. Abinash Virk, a Mayo Clinic [infectious diseases](#) specialist, says the risk of exposure from food is unknown, but likely very low. But she also suggests that people wash certain foods before eating them.

"The biggest risk of contracting the virus from food would be if you touch food that's been exposed and then touch your face," says Dr. Virk. "In that sense it is best to wash your hands before and after handling food and washing unpeeled fruits and vegetables before you eat them."

Dr. Virk says the virus only lasts on objects, such as foods, for one to three days.

### **Cooking kills the virus**

"There's one good thing about the SARS-CoV-2 virus," says Dr. Virk. "It is what we call an 'enveloped' virus. And an [enveloped virus](#) is a little bit more susceptible to heat, bleaching, drying and antiseptics. It is easier to kill than some other viruses. So heating a vegetable or heating some food will inactivate the virus."

### **Wash unpeeled fruits and vegetables with soap and water**

"I have an issue with eating unwashed fruit and vegetables, even when COVID-19 is not around," says Dr. Virk. "I want to wash them thoroughly. So if

I eat an apple and I'm unable to peel it, I will wash it with soap and bottled water. I do that when I travel and at home. I would do that right now. The risk is

low, but you don't know if it has been handled by someone who was ill or not. Be on the safe side."

Dr. Virk says that when you eat a fruit that you peel, such as a banana, you don't need to wash it first. But she suggests washing your hands before and after you peel the fruit and before you touch the edible inside.

## **Take out food and COVID-19**

When ordering take out [food](#), Dr. Virk says to wash your hands before you touch the containers. Then empty the contents, wash your hands again and enjoy the meal.

Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for additional updates on COVID-19. For more information and all your COVID-19 coverage, go to the Mayo Clinic News Network and [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org).

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