

Should I wipe down groceries during the pandemic?

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Should I wipe down groceries during the pandemic? AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

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Experts say it's not necessary for most people.

The coronavirus spreads mainly through the respiratory droplets people

spray when talking, coughing, sneezing or singing. It's why [health experts](#) stress the importance of wearing masks and [social distancing](#).

Experts still recommend cleaning surfaces—especially frequently touched spots that infected people might have recently touched. That will also help reduce risk from other germs that haven't gone away in the pandemic.

People caring for those at risk for [severe illness](#) if infected might also want to take the precaution of wiping down any packages.

But experts say to keep things in perspective. The virus is fragile and doesn't survive easily outside the body for long, they note. Tests finding it on surfaces might just be detecting traces of the virus, not live virus capable of infecting people. Early studies finding it could linger on surfaces for days were conducted under laboratory conditions; the virus likely couldn't survive that long in real life.

Dr. John Brooks, chief medical officer for the COVID-19 response at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said people should do what makes them comfortable. But he said if people unpack groceries without touching their faces and then washing their hands afterward, "I think that may be sufficient."

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