



Food for thought

Food Safety Newsletter | April 2020

This issue of Food for Thought focuses on COVID-19 guidance and information for food retailers

Can COVID-19 be transmitted through food?

COVID-19 is not a foodborne illness. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by coronavirus. There is no evidence of foodborne transmission being a significant pathway. The virus primarily spreads via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes in close contact (within two metres) with other people or by transferring the virus from unwashed hands and by touching the face, especially the nose or eyes.

Coronaviruses can survive on surfaces such as benches for several days, depending on the type of material, temperature and humidity. The virus can be effectively destroyed by heat, common disinfectants, detergents and sanitisers.

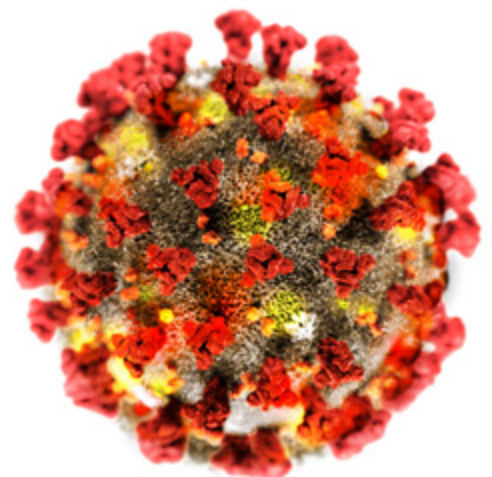
To strengthen risk controls, retail food businesses are encouraged to wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before use.

Is there a risk of COVID-19 transmission from food packaging?

Studies have shown the virus can survive on surfaces for between a few hours and up to several days – depending on the type of surface, temperature and humidity of the environment. If you think a food packaging surface may be contaminated, you could clean the surface with a household disinfectant or food grade sanitiser (depending on the surface and following manufacturer's instructions).

Available resources

The NSW Food Authority website [foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/help/covid-19-advice](https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/help/covid-19-advice) contains relevant factsheets, guidelines and educational material that can be easily accessed. Current information on COVID-19 can be obtained from the NSW Health web site [nsw.gov.au/covid-19](https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19)



Is soap and water enough for hand washing?

Hand washing is critical to reducing the spread of the virus – businesses should ensure adequate facilities are provided and ensure food handlers thoroughly and frequently wash their hands. It is recommended hands are washed thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, including fingers, thumbs, palms, back of hands, wrists, between fingers and under nails, then rinsed and dried thoroughly with paper towel. Normal soap and warm running water are adequate for hand washing. Hand sanitisers can be used as an added measure but must not replace hand washing.

Individuals wearing gloves should be mindful that gloves are cleaned and changed as necessary, and hands are washed between changes.

How can I properly clean and sanitise my equipment and facilities?

Cleaning and sanitising of all food contact surfaces is critical. General cleaning should continue as normal (i.e. using hot water and detergent) and additional cleaning and sanitising of all food contact surfaces is recommended. Regular cleaning and sanitising of frequently touched surfaces including but not restricted to door handles, light switches, trolley jacks, work benches, equipment should be implemented. Before use, all eating and drinking utensils and food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitised using a food grade sanitiser. Ensure manufacturer's instructions are followed when using chemical food grade sanitisers.

Business Continuity

New food retail businesses including mobile food vehicles are required to notify their business through Council's registration process. This may also require a valid Food Safety Supervisor certificate. If your food business is currently registered with Council, there are no further registration or administrative requirements needed for you to provide takeaway or home delivery services from your business. You will, however, need to ensure that you continue to comply with the requirements of the Australia/New Zealand Food Safety Code 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

Hand hygiene

Keep hands clean and food safe



Wagga Wagga Council would like to acknowledge the use of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services' Keep hands clean and food safe poster.



How do I prevent people in my business transmitting the virus?

Adopt best-practice prevention measures to prevent foodborne illnesses and minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission. These measures include practicing good personal hygiene, having clean hands and clothes, keeping food contact surfaces clean and sanitised. Business owners are encouraged to create a culture within the business where staff are engaged in the understanding and identification of risks and evaluate businesses activities to identify pathways of potential transmission and have in place effective control measures.

Any food handler who knows or suspect they are ill with a suspected communicable disease (such as coughing, sneezing, flu-like symptoms, gastrointestinal illness) must be excluded from handling food for sale. It is recommended that the health of all employees is reviewed on a daily basis and any workers showing these symptoms are advised not to come to work.

Councils' Environmental Health team are here to support business continuity and assist food businesses during challenging times.

Environmental Health Officers
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