



May 2020

### Why Food Isn't the Problem With the Coronavirus

So far, we don't have evidence to suggest that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is transmitted through food or causes severe illness by infecting the gut. Here's what we know.

#### 1. People are getting sick from contact with other people, not food.

"The first thing is focusing on what we know about how people are getting sick," says Benjamin Chapman, a professor and food safety specialist at NC State Univ.

And when it comes to risk factors for COVID-19, at the top of that list is being around or close to someone who is infected.



Based on data from reports on clusters of illnesses such as China, cruise ships, and U.S. nursing homes, "we're not seeing either consuming or handling food being a risk factor at all," says Chapman. "If it was something to be concerned about, we would expect to see what a normal foodborne illness outbreak looks like; outbreaks that get traced back to eating a single food, like contaminated romaine lettuce or ground beef.

#### 2. This virus causes severe illness by infecting the respiratory tract, not the gut.

COVID-19 is an "enveloped" virus, meaning that a coat surrounds its genetic material. Given what we know so far, that coat won't survive the high acid environment of our stomachs.



So even if an infected shopper coughed on an apple before you bought (and ate) it, or if a restaurant worker sneezed near your meal before packing it up for take-out, your stomach acid should knock out any coronavirus before it gets a chance to infect your gut cells.

"Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses, like norovirus and hepatitis A, that often make people ill through contaminated food, COVID-19 is a virus that causes respiratory illness.

Another reason is cooking. Enough heat should inactivate the coronavirus.

#### 3. The virus doesn't last for very long on surfaces...and washing or sanitizing your hands is the best defense.

As for surfaces like food packaging, the virus seems to die off quickly. While some virus survived for up to 1-3 days, depending on the surface, half will be gone after 6 to 7 hours and almost all of it in a day or two.

How much is enough to make you sick? It's not clear. But less virus means less risk.

"More importantly, the virus itself is not going to move from my cereal box to my nose, my eyes, or my respiratory system without my hands," says Chapman. "And I can manage that with hand washing."

The risk may be low, but it's a good idea to wash or sanitize your hands after grocery shopping, and unpacking food deliveries and before preparing or eating food. That helps keep any remaining virus from reaching your eyes, nose, or mouth—and it helps protect you against other germs like *Salmonella* or the flu.



### Dandelions: Spring's Earliest Feast



That spring carpet of yellow that stubbornly appears year after year might be considered a weed to some, but to bees and health experts, dandelions are food.

Both bees and butterfly larvae feast on dandelions in April and May. They are an important source of early pollen and nectar.

Dandelions have been an important food source for people since the dawn of humanity.

- ◆ The flowers, leaves and root are all edible.
- ◆ They are loaded with vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants.

Plus, some studies say that dandelions reduce inflammation.

Dandelions are often used to make wine, jelly, and gravies.

Check out the recipes at [dandelionfestival.com](http://dandelionfestival.com).

## Home Repairs and Ladder Falls

The Academy of Emergency Medicine reports a study showing that half of those injured in falls from ladders were hurt at home.

They were working on projects such as painting or cleaning gutters and doing minor roof repairs.

Broken bones were the most common injury, followed by sprains, bruises and cuts.

Almost half of those injured said they fell because the ladder wasn't positioned correctly. It was on uneven or slippery ground, it wasn't securely resting against the house, or it was too upright.

Reaching too far accounted for a third of the falls, followed by slipping down the rungs.

The Academy recommends:

- ◆ Make sure the ladder is on level ground.
- ◆ Place it an appropriate distance from the house.
- ◆ Have someone hold the ladder while you are climbing up or down.
- ◆ Don't reach too far to the left or right.



**May 25th:**

★ **MEMORIAL** ★  
★ **DAY** ★

**Time to Remember Those of Valor**

The tradition of honoring our country's fallen defenders began as a springtime custom following the Civil War. Originally, called Decoration Day, it was a time to remember those whose valor knew no bounds.

- ◆ To the list of those who died at Gettysburg and Bull Run, we have added names from San Juan Hill, Inchon, Vietnam, the deserts of the Middle East, and a thousand other places touched by war.
- ◆ For most of the year, these brave souls lie in anonymity, but on Memorial Day we bring them back to life with our thanks for their great sacrifice.
- ◆ Rather than a time of sadness, it should be an affirmation that these men and women did not lose their lives in vain.

This special day is a time of tribute to those who fell and to a country that plunged onward in pursuit of justice and democracy. We mourn our dead, but we rejoice in their memory and in the democracy they defended.

## Parental Self-Care in the Days of Quarantine

The Calgon commercials of years past - the harried Mom imagining a warm tub filled with bubbles, pleading, "Calgon, take me away!" - were an effective marketing tool.

But were they real life? Maybe not so much.

Today the popular term is "self care," with a definition that varies widely. Its goal is to find time for oneself in an increasingly hectic world. This can be challenging enough, but when that world suddenly includes quarantines, social distancing, and closed schools, what's a parent to do?

Some tips from around the web include:



- ◆ Limit your news and social media intake. There's a balance between being informed and becoming oversaturated. Too much news about things you can't control becomes a negative for your mental health.
- ◆ Stretch. Too much time at home often means too much time spent sitting, so get up and move around, and make sure to stretch. Your hips and joints will thank you.
- ◆ Maintain a routine. This doesn't mean you schedule your day with military precision, but a routine helps us feel a sense of control. Make your bed and get dressed, even if it's into sweatpants. The routine and the change of clothes works wonders for your mindset and your family's mindset.
- ◆ Get outside. Whether it's a long-distance run or a short walk up the street, fresh air and sunshine are key.
- ◆ Consider getting up before the rest of your family. Though it can be tough, an hour to yourself can make all the difference in how the rest of your day goes. For some, this might work better on the flip side - staying up a bit later just for the alone/quiet time.