



## Stay safe when grocery shopping, preparing food during the pandemic



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*Are there special precautions I need to take when buying groceries during the COVID-19 pandemic?*  
Jack M., Nipomo, CA

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Shopping for and handling groceries during COVID-19 is new to all of us. Grocery stores have taken important steps to minimize your risks while shopping for food. Decide if you wish to shop in person, or pre-order your groceries for curbside pickup or delivery. Pre-orders for pick-up or delivery reduces your exposure, decreases store traffic, and prevents exposing others if you are unwell.

If you must visit the grocery store, remember these tips:

1. Use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving the store.
2. Use disinfectant wipes for your cart, basket and the card reader.
3. Minimize the amount of shopping time by using a list.
4. Maintain social distance of at least 6 ft. from others.
5. Touch only what you will buy. Consider using hand sanitizer before and after touching produce.

6. Avoid unnecessarily touching surfaces and don't touch your mouth, nose, eyes or face while shopping.

After unpacking your groceries, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. There is currently no information that indicates that the virus has spread because of contaminated food or food packaging material.

Washing produce before eating it during this pandemic remains as important as ever. You should rinse your produce under CLEAN RUNNING WATER ONLY. Use a vegetable brush to clean thick-skinned produce like potatoes, beets, carrots, and melons to remove as much dirt as possible. You do not need to use any special cleaners, washes, soap, or other products to clean produce. These products are not meant to be consumed and can be DANGEROUS!

Remember to practice the four basic steps to food safety:

1. **Clean**-wash your hands, kitchen surfaces, utensils and produce before preparing and eating food.
2. **Separate**-keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood from ready to eat foods.
3. **Chill**-Keep perishable food refrigerated below 41°F. Perishable food should not be left at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
4. **Heat**-Foods should be cooked to the right temperature. Use a food thermometer to ensure its heated to a safe level.

For more information on Food Safety Guidance and COVID-19 go to our website at: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/SLO/files/322022.pdf> and the UC ANR publications catalog at <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/1901.pdf>

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