



## FAQs: Food Safety & COVID-19

### 1. Is the St. Mary's County Health Department still doing health inspections of local food service facilities?

**Yes.** Our Environmental Health services (e.g., food safety inspections, community complaints, septic, rabies, etc.) will continue to operate, though no client walk-in service is available at the office.

Our Food Safety Program will continue to monitor food service facilities to ensure food safety standards are being met. Inspectors evaluate critical food safety measures that are most likely to contribute to food-borne illness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our Food Safety team has also communicated recommendations on disinfection practices, social distancing and employee sick leave policy with local food service facilities.

### 2. What will happen to a food service facility if one of their employees tests positive for COVID-19?

If a food service employee were to test positive for COVID-19, the facility would be required to temporarily close for cleaning/disinfection - this would not be a removal/suspension of their food license. Re-inspection would be required in order for the facility to reopen.

### 3. Can the community still submit food safety concerns?

**Yes.** Our team will continue to investigate food safety complaints that are made by community members. Concerns should be submitted through the [online community complaint form](#).

### 4. Is food from the grocery store (or a restaurant) safe to eat?

Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food.



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### 5. Should I clean/disinfect food containers that are brought home?

Currently there is no evidence of food, food containers, or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Like other viruses, it is possible that the virus causing COVID-19 can survive on surfaces or objects. For that reason, it is critical to follow the 4 key steps of food safety—[clean, separate, cook, and chill](#).

If you are concerned about contamination, you can wipe down or remove packaging. It is recommended that you wash your hands after handling food packaging, after removing food from packaging, before you prepare food for eating and before you eat. Follow CDC recommendations on [hand washing](#) and frequently disinfect household surfaces where you prepare and eat food.

When you do need to go out for **essential items**, follow these recommendations:

- Limit the frequency of your trips or consider delivery/curbside pickup options
- Try only to handle products you intend to purchase
- Wear a [cloth face covering](#) as recommended by the CDC
- If you choose to wear gloves, remember they also run risk of contamination - Do not touch your face while wearing gloves and dispose of them properly after use
- If possible, use hand sanitizer before getting into your vehicle
- Reusable grocery bags are not recommended at this time - Plastic bags should be disposed of after use
- Practice social distancing - Give as much space to others as possible

### 6. Do grocery stores have different requirements for cleaning?

All licensed food establishments are required to maintain clean facilities. Sanitizing practices are standard for all types of establishments; however, grocery stores have more areas to disinfect, such as checkout areas, grocery carts, and any surfaces or areas touched by customers.