

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance on Food Takeout and Deliveries March 31, 2020

Since February 2020, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health has been following an increase in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the US. The Bureau for Public Health monitors Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updates, hospital admissions, case numbers, and other data to determine the potential risk to citizens in West Virginia from the virus.

The CDC, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) are not aware of any reports at this time that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. Current evidence shows the biggest identifiable risk of transmission of COVID-19 is being around individuals who are symptomatic (and to a lesser extent, infected but not showing symptoms). Food businesses should be following employee health policies and health department recommendations to keep any ill individuals home.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath

PERSON-TO-PERSON TRANSMISSION

- Occurs via small droplets from the nose or mouth of the infected person when they cough, sneeze, or exhale.
- Maintain 2 meter (6 ft) distance between yourself and others - especially anyone coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you feel sick. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance.

PREVENTION

- Isolate sick and diagnosed individuals.
- Encourage proper handwashing.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces.
- Provide education about COVID-19.
- Discourage sharing of food, drinks, etc.

HANDLING MONEY/PAYMENT OPTIONS

- Paying with cash or credit/debit card should be followed by handwashing and/or using hand sanitizer.
- Using an electronic payment method, such as ordering and paying through an app or with PayPal, reduces or eliminates the amount of contact with surfaces others may have touched.

CAN INDIVIDUALS GET COVID-19 FROM TOUCHING FOOD OR PACKAGING EXPOSED TO THE VIRUS?

- The risk of transfer of viruses is very low, based on current research.
- To further minimize risk, handling food packaging should be followed by handwashing and/or using hand sanitizer.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF TAKEOUT OR DRIVE-THROUGH FOOD?

- There is no current indication that takeout or drive-through meals increase illness.
- This option is a far lower risk than congregate dining in since it helps maintain social distancing and reduces the amount of contact with surfaces others may have touched.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF FOOD DELIVERED TO THE HOME?

- Similar to takeout, food delivery helps maintain social distancing and reduces the amount of contact between preparation and serving of food.
- Many delivery programs have instituted a no touch/no interaction option, which further reduces risk.

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR BODY IF YOU DO INGEST COVID-19 THROUGH FOOD?

- Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through droplets. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.
- Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of the virus directly by eating food that might inadvertently contain the virus.
- In commercial food production, processing, and preparation, there are many best practices that are routinely followed as per federal, state and local regulations. These are all designed to prevent food from becoming contaminated with microbes from the environment, including viruses.
- The best thing a consumer can do is to continue using good food safety practices, such as storing food properly, heating food to recommended cooking temperatures, and always washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before preparing or eating food.

For additional information on COVID-19, please visit our webpage at: www.coronavirus.wv.gov.

Questions and concerns can also be directed to the 24/7, toll-free COVID-19 information hotline at 1-800-887-4304.