

Can COVID-19 be transmitted through food?

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), advises that there is no evidence that COVID 19 is transmitted through food.

However, extra care should be taken with health and hygiene of food handlers and consumers to reduce the risk.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 comes from the virus family known as Coronavirus which causes respiratory illness. Coronavirus also includes less serious illness such as the common cold and more serious illnesses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS- CoV).

Depending on the type of material, temperature and humidity, Coronavirus is known to survive on surfaces from a couple of hours to several days.

Coronaviruses can be destroyed by heat (e.g. cooking), use of detergent and sanitisers on surfaces.

It is safe to eat meat?

Although it is suspected that COVID-19 is transmitted from animals to human, it is not likely to be transmitted to human from meat in Australia.

Meat sold in Australia is subject to strict controls which includes the prohibition of the use of meat and offal from diseased animals for human consumption.

However, all raw meat contains bacteria that can cause food poisoning. Therefore, it is important to ensure meat is cooked thoroughly before consumption.

Food handling and personal hygiene

It is important to practice good personal hygiene when preparing food. Such practices include:

- Washing your hands thoroughly before preparation of food, in between different jobs and after going to the toilet.
- Cook meat thoroughly.
- Avoid cross contamination – don't use the same knife to cut lettuce after cutting meat.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing.
- Keep in mind social distancing.

If you own a food business, it is important to be vigilant in cleaning and sanitising your premises to ensure food is being prepared in a safe environment.

Can I keep my food business open?

Unless the government moves to restrict trade, food businesses can continue to operate.

Compliance with the food legislation should be adhered to in ensuring food is produced hygienically and is safe for human consumption. In addition the following precautions should also be taken:

- Keep staff up to date with the COVID-19 situation.
- Observe and practice social distancing in the workplace.
- Ensure all staff are trained and meet health and hygiene requirements.
- Ensure unwell staff stay at home.

Where can I find more information?

For information regarding COVID-19 go to:

www.health.nsw.gov.au

For information regarding food safety and COVID-19 go to: www.foodstandards.gov.au

For information regarding cleaning and sanitising, go to: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au