



**For Immediate Release:** March 3, 2020  
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### **Coronavirus Update: Guidance on COVID-19 Food Safety for Consumers, Food Establishments**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – March 1-7, 2020 is [National Consumer Protection Week](#). With Florida's first presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) identified this week, the **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)** is providing guidance to consumers and food retailers/establishments on food safety to mitigate infection risk.

The FDACS Division of Food Safety inspects and regulates more than 40,000 grocery stores, convenience stores, markets, and food manufacturing facilities in Florida. As of March 3, the Division of Food Safety has been in communication with the majority of these food establishments, as well as the Florida Retail Federation and the Florida Petroleum Marketers Association, to share food safety practices that protect public health.

Consumers and businesses with questions about food safety practices can call the Division of Food Safety at (850) 245-5520 or email [FoodSafety@FDACS.gov](mailto:FoodSafety@FDACS.gov). Questions about other human health-related impacts of COVID-19 should be referred to the Florida Department of Health's COVID-19 center at (866) 779-6121 or [COVID-19@flhealth.gov](mailto:COVID-19@flhealth.gov).

“With coronavirus spreading throughout the country, we should take every action possible to limit its transmission,” said **Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried**. “As residents of the nation's third-largest state, Floridians should adhere to warnings and guidelines from federal, state, and local officials and public health personnel. Proper sanitization and food safety techniques like thorough handwashing and surface disinfection are critical to safeguarding public health.”

“One of the most important preventive measures for mitigating viral and food-borne illness while working with food is to wash hands with soap and water frequently, in-between the handling of raw and uncooked foods, and before handling any food,” said **Dr. Matthew Curran**, FDACS Director of Food Safety. “Today, it is as important as ever to utilize good handwashing and sanitization techniques not only in the home but

also in the workplace. Florida's food supply — and your health — are at the forefront of everything we do here in the Division of Food Safety.”

“While there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted to people via food in the United States, the virus should be killed by normal cooking temperatures,” said **Dr. Lisa Conti**, FDACS Chief Science Officer. “As a general public safety rule, we do not recommend that people consume raw meat or unpasteurized dairy products.”

### **For Retailers/Food Establishments:**

FDACS is reminding these businesses of the following requirements ([Rule 5K-4.002, Florida Administrative Code](#) and [FDA Food Code](#)) to ensure food safety and reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses, such as COVID-19:

- Food preparers must keep hands and arms clean, and follow cleaning procedures including washing at least 20 seconds with hand cleaner and rinsing under warm running water.
- When to wash includes: after touching body parts; after using the restroom; after caring for animals; after coughing, sneezing, or using tissue; after using tobacco; after eating or drinking; after handling soiled equipment during food preparation; after handling raw food and working with ready to eat food; before donning gloves; and after any other activity that contaminates hands. (Chapter 2-301)
- There is required to be at least one hand washing sink (Chapter 5-203), that handwashing sink must be convenient to employees and or immediately adjacent to toilet rooms (Chapter 5-204), and handwashing supplies such as hand soap and cleanser and drying devices such as towels or heated air devices for handwashing sinks are required to be present (Chapter 6-301).

### **For Consumers:**

Studies have shown that human coronaviruses can persist on inanimate surfaces like plastic, glass, or metal for [up to nine days](#). Therefore, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and FDACS recommend the following food safety tips for consumers:

- [Wash your hands](#) often when cooking, including: before, during, and after preparing any food; after handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs; before eating; after touching garbage; after wiping counters or cleaning surfaces with chemicals; after touching pets, pet food, or pet treats; and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Wash your hands even when wearing gloves, as contaminated gloves can spread germs to your hands when removing the gloves.

- [Disinfect and dry](#) commonly-used surfaces such as countertops and cutting boards, as dampness can help remaining viruses survive and multiply.
- Use disposable cloths or paper towels when possible, or wash reusable cloths at 140 degrees Fahrenheit after each use.

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