

# FOOD SAFETY AND COVID-19

While many people attending food shops, businesses or restaurants have expressed concerns for potential COVID-19 related infections, this is not the only food-related safety issue at the moment. Due to social distancing, lots of home kitchens have seen an influx of cooking. And one place you don't want to be during a pandemic is in a hospital with food poisoning. According to the Food Safety Information Council, there are 32,000 hospitalisations and one million doctor visits per year as a result of food poisoning. Here are a few tips to ensure that food is always prepared and stored safely.

- Avoid foods that are spoiled, past their use-by date or in damaged packaging.
- Take chilled, frozen or hot foods straight home in insulated containers.
- Keep chilled foods cold at 5C or colder and hot food at 60C or hotter.
- The 'temperature danger zone' for food safety is between 5°C and 60°C. Bacteria can't grow easily at temperatures outside of this zone.
- Cooking food properly and to the right temperature reduces the risk of food poisoning. Always cook meats all the way through, until the juices run clear. Make sure there is no pink left in mince or sausages. Keep food steaming hot until you serve it.
- Always keep raw foods, cooked or ready-to-eat food separate during transport, storage and preparation.
- Store cooked and ready-to-eat foods above raw foods in the refrigerator.
- When freezing food, avoid freezing large amounts at a time. It's better to split it into smaller quantities in separate containers. This also means you can defrost only the quantity you need.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, away from and below cooked or ready-to-eat food.
- Wash and dry hands before preparing food and between handling raw and cooked foods.
- Maintain clean and dry chopping boards for food preparation.

There is no scientific evidence of COVID-19 transmission via food. As the Department of Health website explains, COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that spreads via "close contact with an infectious person, contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze, or touching objects or surfaces that have droplets from an infected person and then touching your mouth or face".

## What is Council doing?

- Enforcing requirements set out by the *Food Act 2003* and Food Standards Code, which accounts for adequate control measures of COVID-19
- Following all guidelines from the NSW Health and Food Authority.
- Continue to conduct regular inspections of all operating food businesses.
- Generated a food safety factsheet for food businesses who continue to operate during the pandemic.

For more information, visit [qprc.nsw.gov.au](http://qprc.nsw.gov.au) or contact Council on 1300 735 025.

