



## ***How to Wash Produce and Other Food-Safety Tips Amid the Coronavirus Pandemic***

*(Excerpts) Special to The Seattle Times – By Erica Browne Grivas*

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*Can COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus, be spread by food?*

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through the air, via contact with an infected person's body fluids (from coughing or sneezing) or from contact with surfaces on which an infected person has sneezed or coughed. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there have been no reports of the virus being transmitted via food or food packaging.

"We are not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging," the FDA said in a Feb. 27 statement.

As of March 7, the European Food Safety Authority has also confirmed the lack of food-related reports, adding that other coronaviruses, like SARS and MERS, have been shown to need a human or animal host and cannot grow in food.

### **Best practices when washing fruit and vegetables:**

Most government agencies recommend simply washing with running water, scrubbing with a vegetable brush as needed rather than using special produce washes, which can add new deposits. A [University of Maine](#) study concluded that distilled water alone beat out three commercial ozone and chlorine washes for effective cleaning.

The best way to wash produce is just with water, say the experts. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times) Jason Bolton, an associate extension professor and food-safety specialist at the University of Maine, worked on the study. He prefers a water rinse for produce over any washes, including homemade "natural" ones made of lemon juice and/or vinegar. He points out, however, that you don't want a drastic temperature difference between the produce and the water, because it could allow the produce to absorb any bacteria on the surface. "If you had contamination on the surface, it could be sucked in," Bolton said.

In most cases, cool water is a good choice when produce has been stored at most supermarkets' typical temperatures of 50-ish degrees. If a package of greens or baby carrots says "prewashed," Bolton said, "we don't typically recommend rewashing." Equally important is the sanitation of the prep area and tools, from sinks to cutting boards. Don't forget to clean and dry your vegetable brush between uses.

