



# Facts & Tips for Cleaning Fresh Produce

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## ***A consumers guide to washing fresh produce at home***

***Did you know that nearly 48 million people are sickened by food contaminated with harmful microorganisms each year?***

### **THE BASICS:**

- To remove dirt and reduce bacteria on fresh fruits and vegetables, rinse under cold water
- For fruits and vegetable with firm skin (i.e. melon, potatoes), scrub with a clean vegetable brush
- For fruits and vegetables with a soft skin ( i.e. tomatoes), wipe with a clean towel
- It is not advisable to use soap, bleach, sanitizer, alcohol, disinfectant or other chemicals to wash produce. Chemicals can cause serious illness if consumed
- Pre-washed, ready-to-eat or triple-washed produce do not need to be washed again (unless appears visibly dirty). Doing so may increase risk for cross contamination



## THE FDA SUGGESTS 7 TIPS FOR CLEANING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES :

1. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce
2. If damage or bruising occurs before eating or handling, cut away those areas before preparing or eating
3. Produce should be rinsed before preparing or peeling it, so dirt and bacteria are not transferred from the knife or other utensils onto the produce
4. Gently rub or scrub produce while holding under water. No need for soap, detergent or produce wash
5. You can use a clean vegetable brush to scrub firm produce (i.e. melons or cucumbers)
6. Produce should be dried with a clean cloth or paper towel to further reduce any bacteria that may be present. OR gently pat with towel and let air dry
7. Remove the outermost leaves on a head of lettuce or cabbage

keep perishable produce stored in the fridge at or below 40 degrees. Fresh produce that is pre-packaged or pre-cut should be stored in the fridge as soon as possible.



### DID YOU KNOW?

In a recent study, 65 percent of consumers did not wash their hands before starting meal preparation.

Gruba, C. (2014). *Chicken Preparation in the Home: An Observational Study*. Food Protection Trends, 34, 318-330.

## REMEMBER:

Always keep fresh produce separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood.

Always wash your hands before and after handling food.

Wash your hands and any food contact surfaces often. Surfaces such as counter tops and kitchen equipment can be washed with soapy water before and after preparing each food item. Use a disinfectant or household cleaner once finished if you so choose.

After washing, you can sanitize kitchen counters and preparation areas by: Using a commercially available disinfectant product or preparing your own **DIY sanitizing solution**.

### DIY Solution: Mixing and Application

#### 1. MIX :

5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) unscented liquid chlorine bleach + 1 gallon of water



OR

4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water.



2. PREPARE: Wet the surface with water using a clean towel or sponge

3. APPLY: the mixed bleach solution to surface

4. WAIT: 5 minutes for disinfecting to take place

5. RINSE: with warm water

6. DRY: Follow the bleach label instructions or wipe with a fresh towel and let air dry.

**WARNING:** Do not use this solution or other disinfectant products on food. Bleach should NOT be consumed by humans or animals. If someone in your family consumes bleach, call Poison Control or 911 immediatly.

## COVID-19 AND CLEANING FRESH PRODUCE

Currently there is no evidence that SARs-CoV-2 can be transmitted and spread by food or food packaging.



Foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses, like norovirus and hepatitis A, can make people ill through contaminated food. SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness.

It is best to continue to follow the practices listed above to keep your produce safe, and to follow the guidelines outlined by the CDC.

Disinfect frequently touched surfaces (tables, door handles, etc.)

**Wash  
YOUR  
Hands**

and sanitize your hands! Hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% ethanol) should not be a replacement for hand washing, but can reduce the 'load' of microorganisms on ones hands!

**Methanol, ethanol, and bleach are poisons. Drinking them can lead to disability and death.** Methanol, ethanol and bleach are sometimes used in cleaning products to kill the virus on surfaces – however you should never drink them. They will not kill the virus in your body and they will harm your internal organs.

To protect yourself against COVID-19, disinfect objects and surfaces, especially the ones you touch regularly. You can use diluted bleach or alcohol for that. Make sure you clean your hands frequently and thoroughly and avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose.



World Health Organization

#COVID19

#coronavirus



**FACT:**  
Drinking methanol, ethanol or bleach **DOES NOT** prevent or cure COVID-19 and can be extremely dangerous

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