

Specific Feeding Guidelines: COVID-19

Many churches and organizations have ministries that involve gathering people around food – either to eat together or to distribute via a food pantry. These gatherings are now unsafe and put the very people we feel called to serve at risk. How should we respond?

How is the virus spread?

- The coronavirus is mostly spread through the air when people cough or sneeze but there is also evidence that it can be spread through person-to-person contact (like hugs and handshakes) and through touching common objects (like if one person coughs on their hand and touches to-go boxes and the recipient touches them and then touches their face); therefore it's critical to practice rigorous sanitary practices and change gloves frequently.

What should we do?

- Shift from feeding people at your site to take out – single portion to-go meals. To borrow from the Diocese of Kansas's motto: "Feeding without Gathering."
- Frequently wash and sanitize all food contact surfaces and utensils.
- Before and after preparing and packaging food, practice frequent hand washing and single-use glove protocols (<https://www.gfs.com/en-us/ideas/how-use-disposable-gloves-properly-food-service>).
- It's critical to maintain physical distancing during distribution – avoid gatherings of more than 10 people and stay at least 6 feet away from each other. This can be done through cones to indicate how far apart people should stand in the line or through drive-through pick-up.
- It may be helpful to have one member of a family or party pick up food containers for everyone, to reduce the number of people waiting in line.
- Limit those who prepare food at any given time to the smallest number possible.
- Follow these protocols even if we are not sick. People can transmit the virus before they are symptomatic so it's critical that everyone follows these rigorous standards to prevent the infection from spreading.
- Ask every volunteer how they feel and those in their household before every shift -- if not well, please ask to return home. Also, always act as if you and everyone else could be carrying the virus – even asymptomatic people can transmit it.
- Keep calm in terms of purchasing – it is useful to have at least two weeks of food on hand, but it's important to remember neighbors who don't have the ability to stock up at this time and will need supplies throughout this crisis.
- While we focus on this new virus, it's important to remember regular safe food handling rules: the 4 key steps of food safety are [clean, separate, cook, and chill](#) to prevent foodborne illness.

I want to learn more! Where should I look?

- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration - Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration - Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service - Check Your Steps: Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill](#)
- [Feeding America - How is the Feeding America network of food banks responding to the coronavirus?](#)
- [USA Today - When will coronavirus end? What wartime and human kindness can tell us about what happens next](#)