**SomarMed COVID-19 Blog 22nd March 2020**

**How to Supermarket Shop during the pandemic**

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ou don't have to spray your groceries with bleach to prevent the coronavirus. The best way to prevent infection while shopping is to avoid crowds and observe a safe social distance, according to health experts.

The most likely cause of a coronavirus infection is person-to-person transmission, which is why social distancing is so important for prevention. That means grocery stores and markets could potentially pose a risk, particularly if they're full of large crowds of people in close quarters, like a check-out line. “*It’s good practice to stay two metres distant from other shoppers, especially at the* *checkout*’ said Dr Shane Farrelly - an occupational health specialist with SomarMed.

**Keep your distance**

The best way to protect yourself is to shop during non-peak hours if possible, stay a safe distance - at least two metres - from other shoppers, and avoid touching your face. When shopping if you handle a fruit or vegetable then purchase this and use gloves available in the supermarket to handle and place the fruit or vegetable in the provided bag. Remember it is important to protect the front line staff so cover your face and stand back if you sneeze. “If you don’t have a tissue it’s best to sneeze into your elbow - not your hands”, added Dr Farrelly.

**When you get home**

It’s essential to keep your hands clean — wash them before you handle all foods and be sure they are clean before you eat, also be sure to keep all food contact surfaces (dinnerware, prepping tools, kitchen surfaces, etc.) clean too. There is no need to spray bleach on your groceries.

“*It's unlikely that you'll be infected by the virus via your groceries*”, says Dr Tamika Sims, Director of Food Technology Communications at the International Food Information Council. She added, “*There can be a virus transfer risk if someone carrying the virus sneezes onto your produce and within hours you touch it and then immediately eat it — but the chances of this occurring are slim*”.

In fact, using Bleach to spray groceries carries its own health risks.Bleach is not meant to be used to clean any foods or food products. Spraying bleach is particularly bad because it can cause lung irritation if it (or the fumes of concentrated bleach) are inhaled. In addition, too much bleach ([www.somarmed.com](http://www.somarmed.com) ) can cause irritation to your eyes, skin, mouth and throat. “*If you are concerned about your fruits and vegetables, washing under warm water for 20 seconds, once you have washed your hands first, is adequate” adds Dr* Sims.

**Food storage**

Also, consider keeping your fruit in the fruit section of the fridge which you wash with the same disinfectant you use for your counter top once per day. Canned goods or items in plastic or glass containers can also be rinsed with warm water as a precaution (as it’s not clear that these kinds of objects are a major threat of contagion).

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