



U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Information from the FDA on Product Safety

Q: A worker in my food processing facility/farm has tested positive for COVID-19. What steps do I need to take to ensure that the foods I produce are safe?

A: Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 by food. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality. Sick employees should follow the CDC's What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Employers should consult with the local health department for additional guidance.

While the primary responsibility in this instance is to take appropriate actions to protect other workers and people who might have come in contact with the ill employee, facilities should re-double their cleaning and sanitation efforts to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of

the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces. *See:* FSMA Final Rule for Preventive Controls for Human Food.

Food facilities are required to use EPA-registered "sanitizer" products in their cleaning and sanitizing practices.

In addition, there is a list of EPA-registered "disinfectant" products for COVID-19 on the Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 list that have qualified under EPA's emerging viral pathogen program for use against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

IMPORTANT: Check the product label guidelines for if and where these disinfectant products are safe and recommended for use in food manufacturing areas or food establishments.

Q: Do I need to recall food products produced in the facility during the time that the worker was potentially shedding virus while working?

A: We do not anticipate that food products would need to be recalled or be withdrawn from the market because of COVID-19, as there is currently no evidence to support the transmission of COVID-19 associated with food or food packaging.

Additionally, facilities are required to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

Q: If a worker in my food processing facility/farm has tested positive for COVID-19, should I close the facility? If so, for how long?

A: Food facilities need to follow protocols set by local and state health departments, which may vary depending on the amount of community spread of COVID-19 in a given area. These decisions will be based on public health risk of person-to-person transmission—not based on food safety.

Q: What steps do I need to take to clean the facility/equipment to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: FDA-regulated food manufacturers are required to follow Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMPs) and many have food safety plans that include a hazards analysis and risk-based preventive controls. CGMPs and food safety plans have requirements for maintaining clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces. See: FSMA Final Rule for Preventive Controls for Human Food.

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IMPORTANT: Check the product label guidelines for if and where these disinfectant products are safe and recommended for use in food manufacturing areas or food establishments.

We encourage coordination with local health officials for all businesses so that timely and accurate information can guide appropriate responses in each location where their operations reside.

Food facilities may want to consider a more frequent cleaning schedule.