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Is takeout food safe during the COVID-19 pandemic?

For several months, Oklahomans have been hunkered down in their homes as a safety precaution during the COVID-19 pandemic. While this extra time at home has prompted some to spend more time in the kitchen trying out new recipes, others have opted for takeout, curbside delivery or home delivery for their meals.

What safety precautions should you be taking in order to ensure your personal safety?

Christine Walters, Oklahoma State University Extension maternal and child nutrition assistant specialist, said takeout meals are a great option for many people.

“Although the restrictions are being lifted around the state and many restaurants have reopened their doors, the dining in experience still may not be a great idea for everyone, especially those with underlying health concerns,” Walters said. “However, there isn’t any current research to suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging, and there haven’t been any reports of food transmission made to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration or the United States Department of Agriculture.”

Takeout and curbside food delivery is still a great option for many Oklahomans, not only for those with a weakened immune system. It also helps support current recommendations for social distancing.

Walters did say that if food were to become contaminated with COVID-19, stomach acid, which is very acidic, would inactivate the virus.

“Because COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, it isn’t well-suited to infect the gastrointestinal system,” she said.

To help alleviate chances of cross contamination, many restaurants have instituted no-touch options, which further minimizes the risks. Once the food goes into the oven, it is not touched again by anyone other than the consumer.

“However, to further cut down on risk, it’s always best to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap, or use hand sanitizer after handing food packaging from your takeout order,” Walters said.

Consumers also can continue to take advantage of home food delivery services from their local grocery stores. This will help eliminate coming into contact with crowds of people.

“Personal safety is the key message and we simply want people to know they have options for food and groceries that will help keep them safe,” Walters said.