

Strategies to maintain food safety for farm women during covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Along with the whole world, rural women in India have also suffered the pain of the Covid-19 pandemic. To protect it, they adopted various security measures which helped them to avoid it. The pandemic is showing us that something as simple as washing our hands can go a long way in preventing disease. Cleaning and disinfecting countertops and other surfaces can also serve as protection to farm women and their family members. Handwashing remains a critical step in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and should be done often.

Keywords: rural women, disease, protection, COVID-19

Introduction

With the increasing number of coronavirus cases worldwide, people across the globe are trying to be extra careful every day. Masks, gloves and sanitizers are regular domestic objects now. While at present there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with the transmission of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), it may be possible that people can become infected by touching a surface or object contaminated by the virus and then touching their face. The higher risk though, comes from being in close contact with other people while handling of food. To protect the farm women and their family members from any adverse impacts of the Corona pandemic, it is very important to practice proper food safety at home.

Major key points for food safety at home for farm women

- a) Wash hands, surfaces, and fresh produce
- b) Clean and disinfect
- c) Separate raw food from ready-to-eat foods
- d) Cook to proper temperature
- e) Keep food at safer temperatures
- f) Recycle or dispose of food waste
- g) Use clean water

a) Wash hands, surfaces, and fresh produce

The pandemic is showing us that something as simple as washing our hands can go a long way in preventing disease. Therefore, before handling, preparing, cooking or eating food, it is very important for farm women to wash hands with clean water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds. She should also wash her hands after returning back from field, touching her face, coughing, sneezing, blowing her nose, or using the washroom.

b) Clean and Disinfect

Cleaning and disinfecting countertops and other surfaces can also serve as protection to farm women and their family members. Farm women should also wash and sanitize equipment's used for food preparation. This will help eliminate any potentially harmful microorganisms from the food. Always use clean utensils and plates.

Unpackaged produce, such as fruit and vegetables, should be washed thoroughly under running water. If desired, wash the surface with a small amount of soap and water, like our hands, for at least 20 seconds (be gentle with softer produce), and rinse well. Other popular rinses such as vinegar are not known to be effective at killing viruses.

c) Separate raw food from ready-to-eat foods

In preparing and storing food, make sure to

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separate raw and cooked food. Because of the limited ability of coronavirus to survive on surfaces, the easiest way to minimize risk of infection from foods purchased or delivered by neighbors to home is just let it sit in an out-of-the way place for three days.

d) Cook to proper temperature

Farm women should cook all food thoroughly to the recommended temperature. This will help kill dangerous microorganisms, making the food safer for consumption. Bring foods to a boil to make sure that they reach 70°C, a temperature above which foods tend to be safer for consumption.

e) Keep food at safer temperatures

Farm women should practice safety during storing of food. Refrigerate all cooked and perishable foods and avoid leaving cooked food at room temperature for too long. Heat food well prior to serving and refrigerate leftovers immediately. Microorganisms can multiply fast at room temperature, but at temperatures below 5°C or above 60°C, their growth slows down or stops. Where possible by farm women, perishable items should be placed in homemade refrigerator like zero energy cool chamber.

f) Recycle or dispose of food waste

Farm women should recycle or dispose of food waste and packaging in an appropriate and sanitary manner, avoiding build-up of refuse which could attract pests. Food waste from kitchen should be used for making homemade compost for vegetables of nutritional garden.

g) Use clean water

Wash fruits and vegetables with clean water, especially if they are to be consumed raw. Even water can sometimes be contaminated with unwanted microorganisms and chemicals. So, make sure to use water that is safe, or treat it to make it safe for consumption.

Conclusion

Handwashing remains a critical step in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and should be done often. The application of good practices for food safety by the farm women will reduce the likelihood that harmful pathogens will threaten the safety of the food supply.