

HEALTH

Don't Wash Your Chicken; Here's Why

Food & Drug experts are warning people not to wash their chicken before they cook it. It sounds crazy, but here's why...

Studies have shown that 44% of the population washes raw chicken prior to cooking. The percentage goes up to 71% when the chicken is frozen.

Both situations raise the risk of spreading *Campylobacter* bacteria on multiple surfaces (hands, clothing, cooking utensils, counter tops and more) via splashing droplets of water.

Common symptoms of *Campylobacter* poisoning include abdominal pain, severe diarrhea (often bloody), vomiting, irritable bowel syndrome, reactive arthritis, as well as a serious condition of the nervous system known as Guillain-Barré syndrome.

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that approximately one in every 1,000 reported *Campylobacter* illnesses leads to Guillain-Barré syndrome.

As many as 40% of Guillain-Barré

syndrome cases in the U.S. may be triggered by *Campylobacteriosis*.

The Naked Truth

A single drop of juice from raw poultry can have enough *Campylobacter* in it to infect a person!

The National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NAMRS) reported that 47% of raw chicken samples bought in grocery stores tested POSITIVE for *Campylobacter*.

Do NOT wash raw poultry prior to cooking.

Prevent cross contamination- Immediately wash any cutting boards/utensils that have come into contact with raw poultry before using them to prepare any other foods.

If you feel the need to wash your poultry:

Let's face it, sometimes you MUST wash poultry, like the inside of turkeys before stuffing them, legs/thighs to remove bits of bone from butchering, etc. Here's how to do so safely:

Place the poultry in a colander in the center of the sink

Rinse using cold water turned on low, (to help prevent splashing)

Let the chicken set a few moments to fully drain off

Wash your hands with hot soapy water

Wash the surrounding counter areas with hot soapy water (A solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water may be used to sanitize washed surfaces and utensils.)

Dry the counters/ surfaces thoroughly

Properly cooking poultry effectively kills any potential bacteria (*Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, etc) that is on the chicken, but taking these simple steps will ensure that you don't accidentally spread the bacteria prior to cooking. (Source: BlackDoctor.org by Charles Reed)



Coronavirus Isn't Over Yet

By Peter White

NASHVILLE, TN – We can expect to see new variants of coronavirus but they won't be like the old ones, according to a leading virologist. "It's certain," said Dr. Ben Neuman at the Global Health Research Complex at Texas A&M University.

"For a while the virus was getting better at jumping from one person to another," Neuman said. It reminded him of the story of the tortoise and the hare. The early variants ran very fast and very far. But he said that as people built up immunity to them, it became impossible for them to grow.

"The Delta variant, which is the last of the early viruses, has effectively gone extinct worldwide. It is only the tortoises that are left," Neuman said.

Variants like Omicron and BA.2 are the new coronavirus tortoises. "Think of them as being armored. They are not particularly fast, although they can spread in new ways. They can spread to people who have some immunity already. And that is the concern," Neuman said.

Dr. Ben Neuman is the Chief Virologist at the Global Health Research Complex at Texas A&M University.

China and Europe have seen spikes of omicron and BA.2 in recent weeks. Hospitalizations are still low here in the U.S. although on April 2 the CDC announced the BA.2 variant is now the dominant strain.

"The immunity we build is temporary. It has a window. It ticks down until you are no longer protected. As time goes on it becomes less likely whatever protection we have will actually stand up against the new variants," Neuman said.

Omicron and the BA.2 variant are between six and eight times more likely to infect someone who has some immunity from an earlier infection or vaccine. Meanwhile, mask mandates have ended and children are back in school and some complacency about the virus has set in.

"The virus is changing because we are putting it in a bad spot. We are forcing it to change. I see a lot of progress but we are definitely not done yet," Neuman said.

The CDC approved a second booster for seniors last month. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines work on the new variants but not as well as they did on the older variants like Delta. Researchers are testing new vaccines on the new variants. Neuman said the new ones work well on monkeys, mice, and hamsters. No word on humans, yet.

Is a new wave coming?

Nobody knows if the pandemic, now like a low-burning flame, will break out into a raging fire. We also don't know if will see closures and mask mandates once again.

"Back a few months ago our peak was 142 (patients); today we have 7, so the newest wave has not hit the hospital yet," said Dr. Dali Fan, Health Science Clinical Professor at UC Davis in central California.

"Obviously the vaccinated ones are the most protected and the unvaccinated ones are the most vulnerable," Fan said. Your immunity has waned if you got your second shot or booster several months ago.

Dr. Dali Fan is a UC Davis Health Science Clinical Professor. He received his M.D. from Peking University Health Science Center and his



The BA.2 omicron is now the dominant variant in the U.S.

Ph.D. and M.Sc. from Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

"If the case load in the community is higher, then obviously everyone's vulnerability is higher," Fan said. We need to be prepared because nobody knows for sure what will happen next.

"In terms of vulnerability we have to look at vaccinated versus unvaccinated," said Dr. Manisha Newaskar, a Pediatric Pulmonologist at Stanford Children's Health.

"In the previous surges it was very clear, especially also in pediatric populations, children who were unvaccinated were at much higher risk for getting hospitalized compared to the vaccinated ones. So vaccination does protect you from serious infection, especially hospital admission, ICU, ventilator dependence, and all that," she said.

Newaskar said that children with severe asthma, cancer, who are obese, or have some other condition that lim-

its their ability to mount an immune response to the coronavirus are most at risk.

"So taking care of your underlying medical condition is really important and getting vaccinated," she said.

Dr. Manisha Newaskar is a Pediatric Pulmonologist at Stanford Children's Health. She graduated from Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College in Indore, India.

"Our job is to protect ourselves, and our families, and community by doing the right thing, which is getting vaccinated and doing the best we can under the circumstances," Newaskar said.

To stay up to date on vaccines visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

To get a free mask go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/free-masks.html> or call 1-800-232-0233.

Many International Airlines Have Ended Mask Mandates, Could U.S. Be Next?

As we near the April 18 expiration date of the federal transportation mask mandate in the U.S. many are concerned about what the future of traveling will look like.

The U.S. government's mask mandate, which went into effect on February 1, 2021, applies to people on planes, trains, ferries and other modes of public transportation. It was first set to expire March 18, 2021, but has been extended three times. Last month it was challenged in a lawsuit filed by Republican lawmakers from 21 states including: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia and West Virginia.

The chief executives of the country's largest airlines also asked President Joe Biden in a letter to let federal mask mandates at airports and on planes lapse on April 18, along with COVID-19 testing requirements for international travelers. The letter stated that mask mandates "no longer make sense in the current public health context" and that "science clearly supports lifting the mask mandate."

Is the tide turning?

Several international airlines, particularly in Europe, have already begun eliminating mandatory masking on flights, according to CNET.

Over the past few weeks, Danish airports and London's Heathrow Airport have lifted their mask requirements, as have several major British airlines.

Airline employees in England rejoiced in regards to the end of mask mandates. "First flight done without a mask and it was an absolute dream," a woman, who identified herself as a flight attendant from Yorkshire, England, on her social media accounts,



recently wrote on Twitter, alongside a photo of her fully visible smile, according to the New York Times.

On April 4, Norwegian Air announced that it was removing mask requirements for all of its flights.

Following the end of mask mandates in England and Wales, British Airways also lifted its mask requirements on some of its flights.

Swedish airline SAS has eliminated required masking on flights within Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Meanwhile, passengers over 6 that are traveling to or from other countries must still wear masks.

On March 16, Virgin Atlantic made masks optional for fliers traveling to Barbados, St. Lucia, Antigua, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas and Jamaica.

Icelandic Air has also made masks optional for all flights except those to and from Canada, the U.S. and Germany.

The UK-based airlines easyJet, Jet2 and Tui have all lifted in-flight mask requirements for flights that originate and end at locations that don't require

masks, including England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Will the U.S. follow suit?

Whether or not the U.S. will take Europe's lead and officially end the mask mandate on April 18 depends on a decision from the White House. As to be expected, many people are divided on whether or not the mandate should come to an end. Some flight attendants believe the mandate should be extended while others believe it isn't worth it due to the problems they face enforcing it.

Last month, a group of nine flight attendants from Allegiant, American, Delta, Frontier, Southwest and United filed a lawsuit, alleging that the mask mandate is unconstitutional. The flight attendants say mask requirements on airplanes lead to hostility and violence toward them, ABC4 notes.

The Federal Aviation Administration reported 668 out of 1,035 cases of unruly passengers in 2022 have been related to face masks as of March 2022.

On the other hand, A Harris Poll of 2,097 respondents from April 3 shows that 60 percent of Americans support extending the masking requirements beyond April 18.

Some people believe that a decision on mask mandates should be based on COVID cases while others believe that case counts are irrelevant as long as vaccines are preventing serious disease. However, not everyone on a plane can count on vaccines protecting them and the people they live with from severe COVID infections.

"COVID is not over," says Leonard Marcus, the director of Harvard's Aviation Public Health Initiative, which produced a report that some airline executives have used to rationalize ending mask requirements. He says it's too soon to decide if BA.2 merits an extension of the federal mask mandate. However, he says, if the mandate is lifted it will be difficult to reinstate it.

Airlines usually follow the protocols put in place by the Transportation Security Administration, which means if the mandate isn't extended, the airlines are likely to return to the "no mask necessary" policy.

"We remain in communication with the Administration as they reassess the existing mask requirements and work to identify a path forward from COVID-era policies," an Association of Flight Attendants representative told CNET.

How to protect yourself if the mask mandate is lifted?

- If you are traveling, there are a few ways you can protect yourself from COVID whether or the not the mandate is lifted:
- Wear a face mask while in flight.
- Choose a window seat, if possible — this exposes you to fewer people than an aisle seat.
- Stay up to date on your vaccines.
- Wipe down your seat and tray with a disinfectant cloth.
- Wash or sanitize your hands before eating. (Source: BlackDocor.org by Jessica Daniels)