

Online Grocery Shopping

Online grocery shopping and grocery delivery services are becoming more and more popular. We used to think of these services as being limited to urban environments, but large supermarkets and big-box retailers are selling food items and shipping them everywhere. In a survey of more than 30,000 people ranging from teenagers to those older than 65, approximately 10 percent regularly participated in online grocery shopping.

The main reasons for online grocery shopping included saving time, the convenience of using the services during major life events (new baby, caring for loved one, recovering from illness/injury), and be able to spend time on other things.

Studies commonly report the barriers of online grocery shopping to be lengthy waits for deliveries and/or delivery fees, difficulty in doing cost comparisons between items, orders filled incorrectly, and substituting items for out-of-stock purchases without approval.

Other considerations for online grocery shopping include the following:

- **Food choices:** People who use online grocery shopping are less likely to purchase perishable or fresh items than when they shop in the actual store. Although there are healthy shelf-stable options, purchases included more processed, packaged foods that aren't as likely to go bad during delivery or pick-up.
- **Impulse buying:** Studies have shown that impulse buying is lower for people who shop online. They are less likely to add items to their "virtual cart" that weren't originally something they needed, whereas being in the store puts items directly in front of them causing them to buy on a whim. Online grocery shopping may help consumers stick to the grocery list and budget.
- **Nutrition:** Studies have shown that people who shop online do not spend much time researching or looking at nutrition information before purchasing the item. Many online retailers provide an image of the nutrition facts label and ingredients list. This should be used when making comparisons and deciding which items to buy.
- **Food access:** Delivery of groceries in rural settings may increase access to food by reducing transportation barriers and long commutes to stores. However, some specific populations have concerns that need to be addressed by online food retailers. For example, it needs to be clear that online groceries accept federal nutrition assistance programs as a form of payment. In addition, older populations have concerns about the safety of sharing financial information over the internet.

It is anticipated that online grocery shopping will continue to grow in the years to come. Consider these factors when deciding whether this form of grocery shopping is the right fit for you and your family.

Reference:

Jilcott Pitts, S. B., Ng, S. W., Blitstein, J. L., Gustafson, A., & Niculescu, M. (2018). Online grocery shopping: promise and pitfalls for healthier food and beverage purchases. *Public health nutrition*, 21(18), 3360-3376

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