
What Do Consumers Think About Food Safety? Do They Practice Safe Food Behaviors? What the National Surveys Say

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Consumer Food Safety Behavior Trends: An Analysis of Conference Abstracts

To identify and summarize:

- Food safety behavior and attitude themes
- Trends related to the Fight BAC!® messages
- Areas of concern

Comments apply only to conference abstracts and cannot be generalized to any population.

Food Safety Behavior and Attitude Themes

1. Influencing human behavior is difficult
2. Consumers need – yet don't perceive a need for - food safety advice
3. Older adults are savvy safe food handlers
4. Cultural influence affects food safety behaviors
5. Discrepancies exist among what consumers think they do, intend to do, and actually do

Influencing human behavior is difficult

- One-time exposure may change attitudes and intentions
- Interactive, interpersonal, culturally sensitive strategies needed to change behavior

Consumers need – yet don't perceive a need for - food safety advice

- ❑ Think others need the information
- ❑ Lack knowledge about pathogens and high-risk foods
- ❑ Older adults don't accept their vulnerability
- ❑ Young adults are confident, but “don't Fight BAC!®”
- ❑ Exception: mothers with young children

Older adults are savvy food handlers

More likely to:

- Wash hands before cooking
- Own and use a refrigerator thermometer
- Meet recommended cold storage times
- Receive food safety information

Less willing to:

- Pay extra for improved food safety in restaurants, but would find food safety information from restaurants helpful

Cultural influence affects food safety behaviors

- ❑ Non-kin food handlers viewed as more risky
- ❑ Consumers accept unsafe food practices if part of cultural heritage
- ❑ Educational efforts have more impact if adapted to cultural food practices

Discrepancies among what consumers think they do, intend to do, and actually do

- Self-reported and intended behaviors higher than observed behaviors
 - National surveys
 - Hand washing
 - FDA retail observation study
 - Rutgers University young adult observation study

Trends related to Fight BAC!® Messages

- ❑ Self-reported improvements in clean, separate, cook, and chill
- ❑ Achievement of Healthy People 2010 targets in 3 of 4 behaviors
- ❑ Increased hand washing frequency
- ❑ Increased food thermometer usage

Areas of concern

Consumers:

- Underestimate incidence of foodborne illness
- Lack knowledge about certain foodborne pathogens
- More concerned about pesticide and chemical residues
- Eat high-risk foods (recent improvement)
- Most do not use food thermometers
- Many use cloth-wipers while aware of the risk

High-risk populations: unheated deli meats
Cultural practices that compromise food safety

Conclusion

- Difficult to change human behavior
- Difficult to measure these changes based on self-reports
- Panelists took on the challenge
 - National surveys of self-reported behaviors
 - Healthy People 2010 targets
 - Consumption frequencies
 - Differences related to socio-demographics, health status, gender, and age

Panel Presentations

“Comparison of Food Safety Practices and Information Sources for At-Risk Households and the General Population”

- Dr. Mildred Cody, Associate Professor and Head, Division of Nutrition, Georgia State University

Panel Presentations

“Food Handling and Consumption - Results from the FDA/FSIS Food Safety Surveys”

- Ms. Amy Lando, Consumer Science Specialist, FDA

Panel Presentations

“Monitoring Foodborne Diseases: Activities of the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network”

- Dr. Olga Henao, Senior Epidemiologist,
Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance
Network, CDC

Panel Presentations

“Attitudes Toward Food Safety and the Food System”

- Dr. Andrew Knight, Visiting Assistant Professor, Food Safety Policy Center, Michigan State University

Questions

- At the end of all presentations, if time permits

*Please join me in welcoming
our panelists!*