

Foodborne pathogens are invisible

Introduction

Every day 2000 people in the Netherlands (population 16 million) suffer a foodborne infection, but most people underestimate their risk of catching a food infection due to their own behavior in the home kitchen. Also, consumers overestimate their knowledge about food safety and do not always behave according to the knowledge they may have.

Campaign design

To increase knowledge about food safety behavior at home we promoted conscious processing of the information by using the strategy of direct instruction and illustration through vivid images.

To increase risk perception we used fear appeals through vivid images of familiar situations making the unseen bacteria seen using blue UV-light, directly followed by instructions how to decrease the risk.

Based on consumer research three topics were selected:

Refrigerate salads within 2 hours



Use different cutting boards for raw chicken and vegetables



Wash dishcloths 'hot' (140 °F/60 °C)



In order to show the bacteria that are invisible to the naked eye, blue (UV) light was used. The poster also gave instructions for the right, food safety behavior.

The Netherlands Nutrition Centre

Healthy, safe and sustainable food is an important topic in our society. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre (Voedingscentrum) is an independent organisation to which people can turn with any questions they may have on this topic. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare & Sport.

Street furniture posters (locations like bus shelters and city information panels) and online banners were developed for this campaign.



Results

evaluation (N=1.023)

• Risk perception

Regression analysis shows that exposure to the campaign is related to the concern to get sick from food prepared at home. When exposed to the campaign consumers' estimation of their risk of catching a foodborne illness due to food handling and preparation at home increased.

• Knowledge

- Although the tips that are given are not new to most consumers more than 2/3rd of consumers that have seen the campaign materials (N= 92) say they are encouraged to more food safety behavior.
- 70% are more aware of the risks of foodborne illnesses.
- 67% are stimulated to do more to prevent food infections at home.
- 54% indicate that the campaign helped them to improve their knowledge on what to do to prevent a foodborne illness.

• Design

- Results show that consumers who have been exposed to the campaign find the posters and banners: clear (87%), credible (81%), and trustworthy (80%).
- 65% are enthusiastic about the UV-light image.
- 78% appreciate the practical tips.

The campaign successfully managed to address the issue of food safety at home.

Learnings

- The combination of daylight and UV-light was successfully used to visualise the invisible.
- Due to standard high quality UV filters in digital camera's it is difficult to produce these kind of images.
- Exposure to these images without consciously noticing the posters has also shown some effect on risk perception.
- A mix of both well-known and new topics was successful to address a food safety message.

Conclusions

After exposure to the outdoor campaign Foodborne Pathogens are Invisible consumers had a higher estimation of their own risk of catching a foodborne illness due to food handling and preparation at home.

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