

Survey on “5 Keys to Food Safety”

Abstract

Objectives

Most foodborne diseases can be prevented by adopting proper food handling practices. By making reference to the 5 Keys to Safer Food promulgated by the World Health Organization, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has developed the “5 Keys to Food Safety”, namely “Choose, Clean, Cook, Separate and Safe Temperature”. In order to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of the local public regarding the “5 Keys to Food Safety” and to identify their information needs to facilitate CFS subsequent planning on risk communication activities, a survey was conducted.

Design/Subjects

The survey on “5 Keys to Food Safety” was conducted from 16 June 08 to 13 July 08. Face-to-Face interviews were carried out among 1,231 Hong Kong residents, aged 18 to 64. 15 questions were used to analyse the knowledge, attitude and practice of public towards the “5 Keys to Food Safety”.

Results

The survey results revealed that majority of the public held positive attitude towards the “5 Keys to Food Safety”. Over 96% of the population agreed on the corresponding food safety measures under four of the five keys, namely “Choose”, “Clean”, “Separate” and “Cook”. However, only 80% agreed that it is unsafe to keep cooked food at room temperature for more than two hours, one of the food safety measures under “Safe Temperature”. For the knowledge on 5 Keys, fair performances (43% of the population got three marks or above out of a total of five marks) were observed. Only 24%, 27% and 38% of the population knew the correct way of washing hands, the minimum core temperature of food to ensure thorough cooking and the correct ways to ensure that perishable prepackaged food are safe to consume respectively. Concerning food safety practices, most of the population has already adopted proper food safety practices regarding “Cook”, “Choose” and “Clean”. Nevertheless, practices regarding “Safe Temperature” (45% of the population do not often/never check the temperature of the refrigerator) and “Separate” (48% of the population do not often/never use separate sets of knives and cutting boards when preparing raw food and cooked food) were being overlooked by nearly half of the population. Television, newspaper, magazines, websites and radio were rated as the top five sources of food safety information.

Conclusions

Survey results revealed that majority of the public held positive attitude towards the “5 Keys to Food Safety” but there is room for improvement on their knowledge and practice. The CFS has produced a variety of educational resources and promoted the “5 Keys to Food Safety” amongst the public and trade through popular publicity channels.