

Title Evaluation of a pilot educational program to teach consumers about fresh produce safety  
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### **Abstract**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate there are 76 million case of foodborne disease annually. Foodborne disease is usually associated with beef, poultry, fish, and seafood. However, the number of reported cases of foodborne disease related to fresh produce is increasing. Consumers may not associate fresh produce with foodborne disease nor recognize that these foods require safe handling. To address this educational need, a one-hour educational program was developed to teach consumers about safe handling of fresh produce. The objective of this research project was evaluation of this pilot educational program. Extension agents in two Texas counties presented this pilot educational program to subjects. Subjects (n=26) were Caucasian females and 65% were over age 55. Fifty-eight percent reported completing some college while 25% were college graduates. One-third of subjects reported an annual household income greater than \$50,000. At the conclusion of the program, subjects completed a post-test and retrospective pre-test that included behavior and attitude statements. Specifically, behaviors and attitudes were reported using Likert-type scales. Wilcoxon's signed-rank tests were used to analyze evaluation data and a p-value of 0.05 was selected to determine statistical significance. Results of statistical analyses indicated that subjects intended to improve six of nine behaviors relating to fresh produce safety. These behaviors included washing fresh produce, refrigeration of cut/peeled produce, hand washing, cleaning/sanitizing food preparation areas, and the use of separate cutting boards for raw meats and fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, subjects' attitudes about foodborne disease as a problem improved. Results suggest this pilot educational program may be an effective tool to teach consumers about safe handling of fresh produce.