

Use of Behavioral Change Theories in Development of Educational Materials to Promote Food Thermometer Use

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SUMMARY

Although visual methods are inadequate to determine safe endpoint cooking temperatures of meats such as ground beef, consumers often rely on color and texture. Fewer than 6% of American consumers use a food thermometer when cooking small cuts of meat. Most people are unaware of how to insert a food thermometer into small cuts and of recommended endpoint temperatures. Behavioral change theories (Health Belief Model and Stages of Change Model) were used in developing educational materials to promote food thermometer use. A majority of the 295 people who received the materials and returned a completed post-survey rated all materials as easy to understand and useful in explaining how and why to use a thermometer. The brochure and video, which contained information targeted toward people who do not use a thermometer, were rated higher than the recipe cards regarding effectiveness in helping people learn about thermometer use. The video, which also contained information about selection and use of thermometers, was ranked most useful and most motivating by the small portion of consumers who were using thermometers prior to receiving the educational materials. Increased use of food thermometers and improved knowledge about and attitudes toward food thermometers were reported.

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