This year, about 5,000 people will die from foodborne illness.

Approximately 13 men, women, and children die every day from foodborne illness.

More than 325,000 people are hospitalized each year for foodborne illness.

Approximately 76 million cases of foodborne illness occur annually across the United States.

Did you know...

United States Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service

www.befoodsafe.gov

September 2006

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Dear Food Safety Educator,

Welcome to the Be Food Safe campaign!

The Be Food Safe partner campaign, developed by USDA using the Fight BAC!® messages and endorsed by the Partnership for Food Safety Education, is a communications program that delivers specific safe food handling messages to help consumers understand the simple steps that can be taken to prevent foodborne illness. Using an easy to remember theme directed to caregivers of children or older adults, the Be Food Safe campaign empowers consumers with the knowledge to achieve and maintain safe food handling behaviors.

With this partner media toolkit, we invite you to join the campaign to educate the public about safe cooking and handling of food. This toolkit is designed to be a companion to your existing food safety education efforts and provides the tools needed to launch your own local media campaign to spread the Be Food Safe message. It features a CD containing ready-to-use print and radio advertisements, feature articles, and other tools to help you run an effective, co-branded campaign.

As a partner in this program, you will be helping reduce the number of cases of foodborne illness—a serious but little recognized public health issue that causes approximately 13 deaths each day in the U.S.

If you should have any questions concerning the Be Food Safe media campaign, please e-mail befoodsafe@fsis.usda.gov. On behalf of USDA and the Partnership for Food Safety Education we thank you for using the campaign materials.

Together, we can help America Be Food Safe.

Sincerely,

Mike Johanns      Tim Hammonds

Secretary of Agriculture     Chairman

Partnership for Food Safety Education
Foodborne illness is a serious public health threat. Each year, approximately 76 million cases of foodborne illness occur in the United States alone, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Of those cases of foodborne illness, more than 325,000 people are hospitalized and about 5,000 deaths occur.

Why Be Food Safe?

Preventing foodborne illness is one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) top priorities. For more than 100 years, the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has worked with our Nation’s commercial suppliers to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged for public consumption. USDA recognizes that food safety takes the cooperation of government, scientists, educators, the food industry, and consumers to make sure our foods are safe. And because research shows that improper handling, preparation, and storage of food can cause foodborne illness, FSIS has conducted—and is a key stakeholder in—many public education programs to prevent foodborne illness.

For over 10 years, USDA, along with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has served as a Federal liaison to The Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE), the public/private partnership that created the Fight BAC™ campaign. This national program emphasizes the four basic safe food handling behaviors: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill. Subsequent USDA initiatives have all supported these messages and the Be Food Safe campaign focuses directly on these four key concepts.

While everyone is at risk for foodborne illness, there are those that face a higher risk if they consume unsafe food. One in five Americans are more at risk than most for contracting a foodborne illness that may result in a longer illness, hospitalization, or even death. These food safety steps are especially important for these at-risk persons include the very young, older adults, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems.

What is the Be Food Safe Campaign?

USDA developed the Be Food Safe campaign in cooperation with PFSE, FDA, and CDC because research shows that Americans are aware of food safety, but they need more information to achieve and maintain safe food handling behaviors. The Be Food Safe campaign, which is grounded in social marketing, behavior change, and risk communication theories, is designed to provide educators with the tools to inform consumers about foodborne illness and raise the level of awareness of the dangers associated with improper handling and undercooking of food.

The campaign uses new consumer-tested materials and messages to help consumers change their behaviors. The campaign theme is easy to remember and complements other important outreach efforts. The campaign is targeted to caregivers who prepare food for public consumption. USDA recognizes that while Americans are aware of food safety, they need more information to achieve and maintain safe food handling behaviors. The Be Food Safe campaign, which is grounded in social marketing, behavior change, and risk communication theories, is designed to provide educators with the tools to inform consumers about foodborne illness and raise the level of awareness of the dangers associated with improper handling and undercooking of food.

Here are some of the ways you can use the Be Food Safe campaign materials to work with the media and educate others about safe cooking and handling of food. We encourage you to develop your own local messages that emphasize these four key concepts, which are: 

1. Clean: Wash hands, utensils, and working surfaces before and after handling food.
2. Separate: Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood away from ready-to-eat food in the preparation area and during storage.
3. Cook: Cook food to safe internal temperatures—check with a food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products are cooked safely.
4. Chill: Refrigerate or freeze perishable food promptly after purchase and after preparing it.

Partner with local businesses to purchase media ad time and encourage media outlets in your area to feature the logo to leverage the credibility of trusted national and local sources for food safety information. The Be Food Safe logo is easy to recognize and can be incorporated into many existing messages. 

The campaign materials provide everything needed for partners to use in taking this food safety message to their communities. The accompanying guide describes the campaign materials in detail and can be used as a guide to develop local messages and materials.

The Be Food Safe campaign is a great example of how federal, state, and local organizations can work together to promote a common public health message. If you are interested in learning about other successful public health campaigns and how you can incorporate key features into your own efforts, please contact your local government health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
With the continued focus on the safe food handling behaviors of Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill, the Be Food Safe campaign uses new consumer-oriented materials and messages to help consumers change their behavior and maintain those changes. The Be Food Safe campaign is targeted to caregivers who prepare food for children or older adults—commonly referred to, not only have the incentives needed to limit food safety messages, but also have the motivation to change behavior.

The Be Food Safe campaign theme is easy to remember and complements other important outreach efforts like Fight BAC!®. It is designed to be an “umbrella campaign” that can be incorporated into many existing educational efforts. The eye-catching materials include an area for partners to use their organization name and logo to leverage the credibility of national and local voices for food safety information.

The Be Food Safe national media strategy includes a complimentary media mix of advertising for prime and radio. The print advertisements feature colorful, close-up images of the behaviors the campaign is seeking to influence. The radio spot incorporates fun, upbeat music with a memorable “jingle” that encourages consumers to take action to be food safe.

To further support the advertising campaign, two related feature articles are designed to earn additional coverage in local media outlets. USDA also has created a Be Food Safe letterhead to use in correspondence and a Be Food Safe promotional postcard.

Partners like you—stakeholders in education, public health, retail, and industry—can achieve a greater impact on food safety and nutrition than national news outlets. According to a study commissioned by the International Food Information Council, local newspapers and Internet news broadcasts report more news and information on food safety than national news outlets.

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How Can You Help Others Be Food Safe?

According to a study commissioned by the International Food Information Council, local newspapers and news broadcasts report more news and information on food safety and nutrition than national news outlets. Partnerships with local organizations across the country will factor greatly in the success of this campaign. Partner like you—stakeholders in education, public health, retail, and industry—can achieve a greater impact by working together to incorporate the Be Food Safe message into their existing strategies.

With this toolkit, you are invited to use the campaign materials to work with the media and educate the public about safe cooking and handling of food. We encourage you to use these materials to promote safe food handling in your community. The accompanying guide describes the campaign materials in detail and provides style guidelines. These materials and approaches are just some of the building blocks you can use to customize your own outreach efforts.

Here are some of the ways you can use the Be Food Safe campaign materials to reach consumers in your community:

• Partner with local businesses to purchase media ad time and encourage media outlets in your area to cover the campaign.

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• Work with a media buyer to help you develop a radio, print, and Internet advertising campaign.

• Stage food safety events at radio stations, grocery stores, shopping centers and malls, festivals, museums, schools, and camps.

• Prepare and disseminate press releases or feature stories during National Food Safety Education Month.

• Display the Be Food Safe poster prominently in your offices and distribute additional promotional items with the Be Food Safe logo to use in group settings.

• Collaborate with local health departments, schools, food retailers, hospitals, and other community organizations to distribute materials on safe food handling.

• Incorporate the Be Food Safe message on your Web site and promote linkages with other relevant sites including food and lifestyle sections of news sites, medical sites, and food sites.

Partners are essential in promoting the Be Food Safe message and generating excitement and attention for this new ad campaign. We look forward to working in partnership with you to fulfill our pledge to help America Be Food Safe.
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Secretary of Agriculture

Tim Hammonds
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Become a Campaign Partner and Help America

be food safe

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