

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON SELF REPORTED FOOD SAFETY BEHAVIORS IN FLORIDA YOUTH

Saqib, H¹; Almond, C¹; Garcia, J²; Gibney, V.H.¹; Shelnutt, K^{1 2}

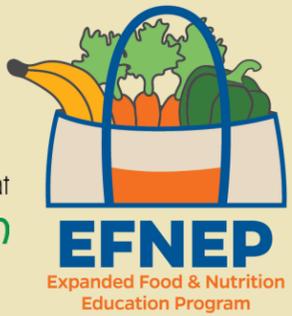
¹UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program, University of Florida

²UF/IFAS Extension Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program, University of Florida

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



grow • shop • cook • eat
Family Nutrition Program



EFNEP
Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

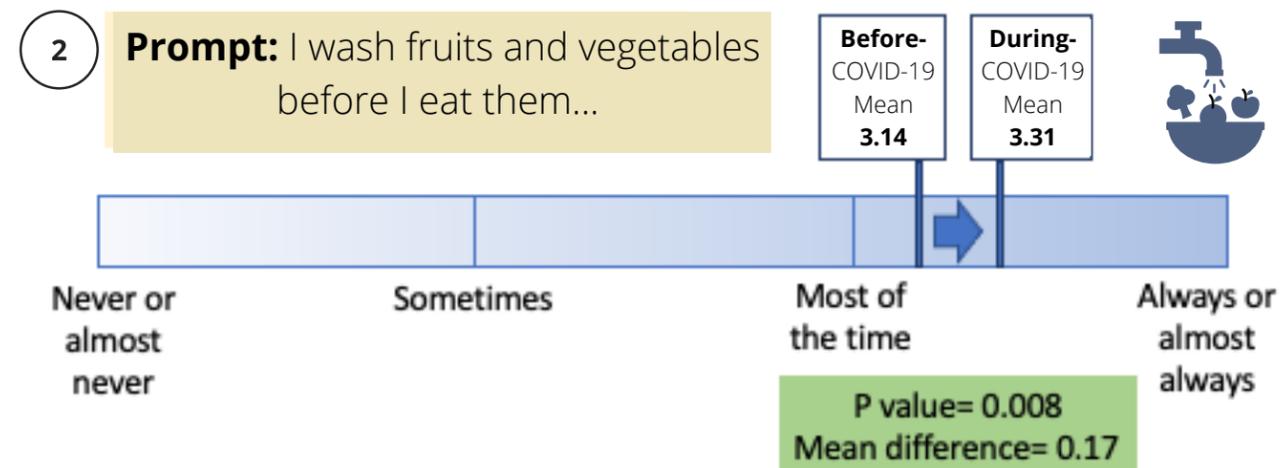
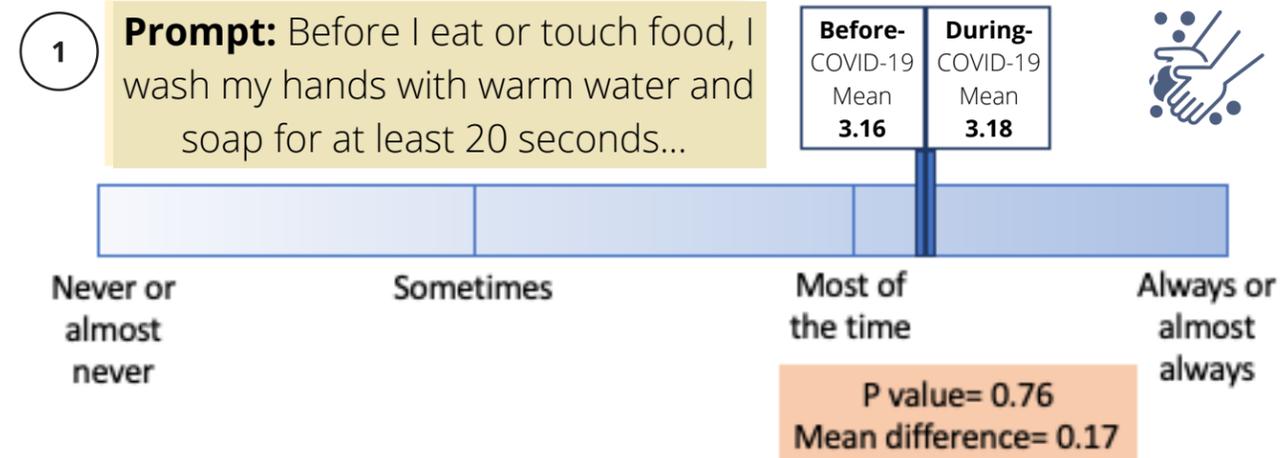
BACKGROUND

Measures to protect against the spread of COVID-19 include guidance on personal and environmental hygiene. Some guidelines related to COVID-19 directly align with or have similarities to evidence-based food safety practices (FSP) taught in nutrition education classes, including handwashing and washing produce before eating.

Objective: To understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth handwashing and washing produce before eating behaviors.

METHODS

- Data were collected from youth (N=1,098) in grades 3-5 who participated in SNAP-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Florida.
- Utilizing common self-report survey measures, baseline measures from three years prior to the pandemic and three months during the pandemic were compared for handwashing before eating and washing produce before eating.
- Due to incomplete data collection during the first 8 months of the pandemic, only behaviors from October 20-January 31 intervals (October 2018- January 2021) were compared to control for seasonal differences.
- The data from before COVID-19 was collected via in-person nutrition education classes, while the data collected during COVID-19 was primarily from virtual nutrition education classes (86% of classes being virtual).



RESULTS

No statistically significant difference was found in the frequency of handwashing before and during COVID-19 (3.16 versus 3.18, respectively; $p=0.76$) (figure).

However, a statistically significant increase was found in the frequency of washing produce before eating before and during COVID-19 (3.14 versus 3.31, respectively; $p=0.008$) (figure).

CONCLUSION

This study did not find any significant changes in handwashing frequency during COVID-19, however, a significant increase in washing produce prior to eating was found. Handwashing prior to eating is a current CDC guideline for COVID-19 mitigation while washing produce prior to eating is not (CDC 2021). Changes in lifestyle and/or eating arrangements during the pandemic might explain these findings.

CDC. How to Protect Yourself & Others. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>. Published February 4, 2021. Accessed February 14, 2021.