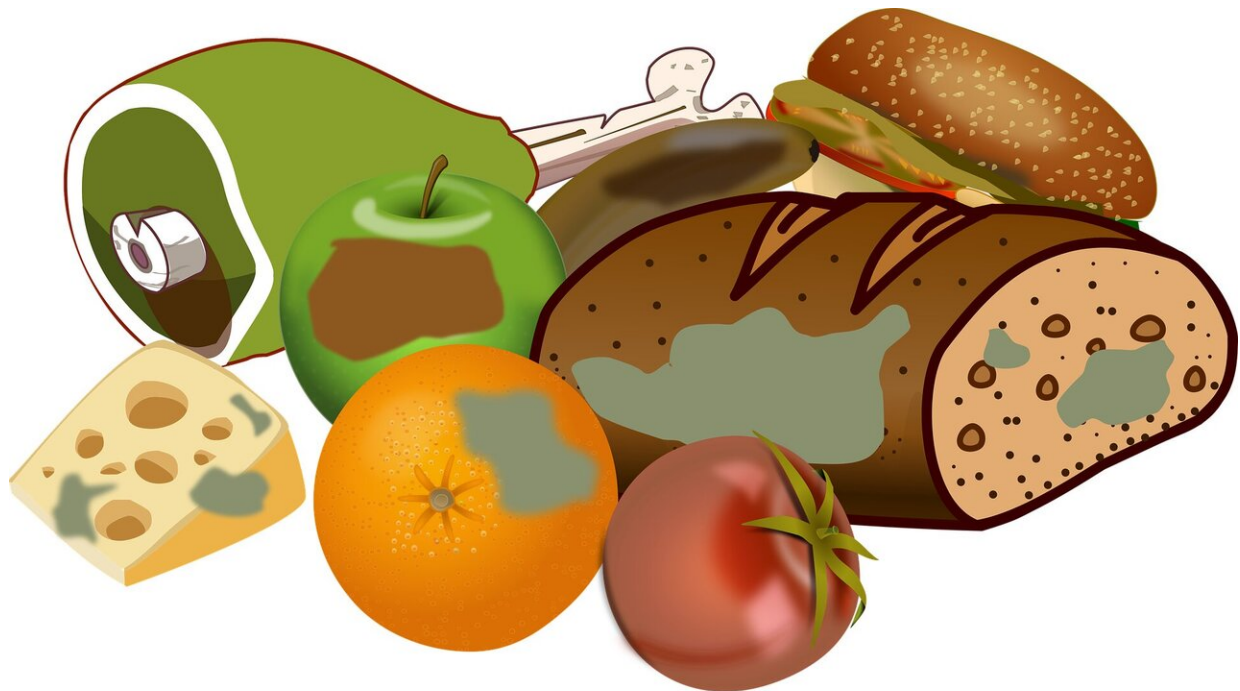


# Food safety model may help pandemic management

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A model for successfully managing food safety incidents has been developed by a diverse team of academics and researchers from Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health, and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences—and they believe the same applications can apply to pandemic management.

"It's crucial that the public does not lose trust in governments and the officials communicating information during a crisis," says Dr. Annabelle Wilson from the College of Medicine and Public Health at Flinders University.

"The key is to be transparent in messaging. Our [model](#) was developed to address food incidents and it highlights strategies to use to communicate effectively with the public. The same ideas make sense in a COVID-19 situation."

The Flinders researchers' model identifies 10 strategies, including transparency; development of protocols and procedures; credibility; proactivity; putting the public first; collaborating with stakeholders; consistency; education of stakeholders and the public; building your reputation; and keeping your promises.

The model has been presented to key government bodies including SA Health and Food Standards Australia New Zealand, and the original work was then replicated in Ireland.

"We have found that in times of crisis through a major food incident—when the public may doubt who they trust—it is imperative that the messages of the food regulators and [government](#) authorities are trusted so that the public can act accordingly in line with recommendations.

"Therefore, the model we created focuses on how authorities can best communicate key messages to the public—which in a pandemic involves key behaviors like social distancing."

While pandemic management differs from a food incident—as the responsibility to act is with the public rather than identifiable regulatory bodies, and governments must weigh competing risks in creating

policy—the Flinders researchers conclude that many of the strategies identified in their [food](#) trust model could be successfully applied to the maintenance of trust in public [health](#) officials prior to, during, and after pandemics.

"The ultimate goal is to maximize [trust](#) between the public and governments in Australia, to support public adherence of [public health](#) recommendations in response to COVID-19, such as social distancing and isolation," says Dr. Wilson.

"Ideally, we would like to test the application of this model in the COVID-19 [pandemic](#) context, and then roll it out for use by state and federal governments across Australia. We currently have a grant application under review to ideally help us to do this."

The paper, titled "Developing and Maintaining Public Trust During and Post-COVID-19: Can We Apply a Model Developed for Responding to Food Scares" has been published in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*.

**More information:** Julie Henderson et al., Developing and Maintaining Public Trust During and Post-COVID-19: Can We Apply a Model Developed for Responding to Food Scares, *Frontiers in Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2020.00369](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00369)

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