



# Food Allergies

Aware | Prepare | Declare





# Allergen, allergy and anaphylaxis explained

  
**10%**

  
**2%**

**Did you know Australia has one of the highest allergy rates in the world?<sup>1</sup>**

Recent Australian data shows 10% of children under one year have a proven food allergy and an estimated two percent of adults are affected.<sup>2</sup>


**Anaphylaxis leads to the death of between 10 and 20 Australians each year.<sup>2</sup>**

**Common food allergies**  
The most common food allergies in Australia are:<sup>4</sup>

  
PEANUTS


  
COW'S MILK


  
TREE NUTS


  
EGGS

  
SOYBEANS

  
CEREALS (CONTAINING GLUTEN)


  
CRUSTACEANS

  
SESAME SEEDS

  
FISH (INC SHELLFISH/ MOLLUSCS)


  
LUPIN

**Uncommon food allergies**  
Some uncommon allergens include:<sup>4</sup>

  
KIWI FRUIT

  
BANANA

  
CHICKEN

  
MUSTARD

  
CELERY

A **food allergy** is a person's immune system response to a particular food that the body believes is harmful to them.<sup>2</sup> This immune response is called an **allergic reaction**. An **allergen** is a substance that causes an allergic reaction. Allergies can be genetically inherited (known as atopy) or may spontaneously arise.<sup>3</sup>

An **allergic reaction** can range from mild to severe, symptoms may be localised or general and a reaction can be immediate or delayed.<sup>4</sup>

**Anaphylaxis** is the most severe form of an allergic reaction and it can be life threatening.<sup>3</sup>

Symptoms of a **mild allergic reaction** include:<sup>5</sup>

- Mouth tingling
- Hives, welts or body redness
- Face, lips or eyes swelling
- Vomiting or abdominal pain

Symptoms of a **severe allergic reaction** include:<sup>5</sup>

- Difficult and/or noisy breathing
- Tongue swelling
- Throat swelling or tightness
- Hoarse voice or difficulty talking
- Persistent cough or wheezing
- Loss of consciousness
- Children becoming pale and floppy

**Handy to know**

**Coeliac disease** may also be called **gluten intolerance**. It is an auto-immune disease, which means the body attacks itself when gluten is digested. It is not an allergy.<sup>5</sup>

**Sulphites** are additives to food which help preserve the colour or flavour of food. They can cause symptoms similar to an allergic reaction, although they are not allergens.<sup>5</sup>

**Intolerance v Food allergy**

Food intolerance is not a food allergy. Food intolerance is not due to an immune response, where a food allergy is.<sup>5</sup>

Symptoms of food intolerance include stomach pain, bloating, nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting, but is not life threatening.<sup>5</sup>



# Top 10 Allergens in Australia

The Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code requires the presence of the following allergens be declared in food labels, displayed in connection with the display of the food, or provided to the purchaser on request. The examples provided below are NOT exhaustive.

<div>1</div> <div><b>Peanuts</b> Found in: mixed nuts, pastes, butters, oils, sauces, dukkha, curry pastes, vegetarian meat substitutes, baked foods, chocolate, confectionary and frozen desserts.</div>	<div>2</div> <div><b>Tree nuts</b> Includes all nuts that grow on trees, except coconuts e.g. almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans and walnuts. Found in: nut pastes/ butters and oils, sauces, artificial and natural flavouring, nut syrups and liqueurs, baked goods, marzipan, chocolate, confectionary and processed meats.</div>
<div>3</div> <div><b>Cow's milk</b> Found in: butter, cream, cheese, yoghurt, ghee, whey, casein, custard, milk powder, margarine, chocolate, drinking chocolate, confectionary and coconut products.</div>	<div>4</div> <div><b>Crustacea</b> Includes sea creatures such as lobster, prawns, bugs and crabs. Found in: sauces, pastes, stock, prawn cracker, chitin, soups, bouillabaisse and oils which shellfish has been cooked in.</div>
<div>5</div> <div><b>Eggs</b> Includes albumin, globulin, and imitation egg products, dried or powdered egg, lysozyme and meringue mix. Found in: mousse, mayonnaise, salad dressings, batters, baked goods, confectionary, frozen desserts, pasta and mock or butter cream.</div>	<div>6</div> <div><b>Wheat</b> Found in: batter, beer, sauces, confectionary, flavouring, hydrolysed vegetable protein (HVP), icing sugar, malt, mustard, meat or seafood substitutes, soy sauce, semolina, tabouleh and couscous.</div>
<div>7</div> <div><b>Fish (including shellfish)</b> Includes fish and shark as well as molluscs e.g. octopus, cuttlefish, mussels and oysters. Found in - antipasto mix, sauces, paste, dips, stock, gelatin, products fortified with omega 3 fatty acids and anchovies.</div>	<div>8</div> <div><b>Soybeans</b> Found in: bean curd, edamame, miso, dairy substitutes, soy protein isolates, tamari, tempeh, sauces, pastes, confectionary, flavourings, gelato, sorbet and HVP.</div>
<div>9</div> <div><b>Sesame seeds</b> Found in: halvah, hummus, sesame oil, tahina, baked goods, dips, dressings (sesame oil), herb and spice mixes, marinades and spreads.</div>	<div>10</div> <div><b>Lupin</b> Found in: bread, bakery and pasta products, sauces, beverages and meat based products such as burgers and sausages.</div>

# Know your statutory requirements

As a food business, you are required to comply with Western Australia’s Food Act 2008 and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

## Food Act Offence

Section 16 of the Food Act relates to a food business falsely describing food, in relation to selling food with an undeclared allergen that can cause the consumer physical harm.

This section may apply if a consumer declares that they are allergic to a food, and therefore relies on the information provided to them by the food business.

When a person or business falsely describes food that they know, or ought to reasonably know, contains an ingredient that can cause physical harm to the consumer, they commit an offence.

An individual who is convicted of this offence may be penalised up to \$75,000 or two years imprisonment. A body corporate that is convicted of this offence may be penalised up to \$500,000.

## Food Standards Code Offence

Section 1.2.3 of the Code states that if any of the following ingredients are contained in food, whether as an ingredient, compound ingredient, food additive or processing aid, they must be declared.

- Crustaceans
- Peanuts
- Soybeans
- Fish (including shellfish/molluscs)
- Tree nuts
- Sesame seeds
- Cow’s milk
- Egg
- Lupin
- Cereals (containing gluten) i.e. wheat, rye, oats, barley and spelt.

Section 1.2.1 of the Code details requirements for food which is unpackaged and packaged.

Food labels are generally required for packaged food items and the Code sets specific requirements for information which must be included.

If food is not packaged and/or not required to bear a label, allergen information must be displayed in connection with food sold, or information must be provided to the customer upon request.

Section 3.2.2 of the Code requires a food business to ensure that persons undertaking or supervising food handling operations have skills and knowledge in food safety.

This includes staff having a sound understanding of food allergies.

Recently legislation changed to introduce new requirement for the labelling of allergen in food. These requirements include that allergen information is to be declared:

- In a specific format and location on food labels
- Using simple, plain English terms in bold font

Businesses have 3 years from 25 February 2021 to implement the new requirements.

An individual who is proven to commit this offence may be penalised up to \$50,000 and a body corporate that is proven to commit this offence may be penalised up to \$250,000.

# Help minimise risks – management and proprietors

Allergy aware management and procedures are essential throughout food businesses to create a solid basis for allergy awareness.



## Tips

Our tips to assist you with allergen focused management strategies and procedures include:

- Ensure all staff who are in contact with food (e.g. waiters, goods receivers, apprentice chefs and sous chefs) have completed food safety training including a module on allergy awareness
- Conduct annual food safety refresher training to ensure staff remain allergy aware
- Encourage discussion during management/staff meetings on any recent allergy queries, to create active communication about allergies
- Create a standard operating procedure to assist staff with action/steps to take in order to respond to any customer allergy enquiries
- Complete the allergen matrix included in this kit and ensure it remains current. The chef or cook should be responsible for updating the matrix
- Ensure all staff are trained on how to use the allergen matrix and are aware of its location
- Ensure ingredient lists for menu items are easily accessible to assist staff with confirming menu ingredients
- Keep ingredients in menu items consistent. If changes are made to menu items ensure service staff are made aware of any changes
- Display the Signs and Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction infographic included in this kit in a clearly visible area for staff
- Display the ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis included in this kit in a clearly visible area for staff
- Consider offering allergen free items and highlighting them on your menu.
- Once you have developed and implemented food allergy strategies and procedures, why not promote your business as allergy aware?



# Help minimise risks – Food preparation and cross contamination

Food sold to individuals with food allergies must be prepared carefully in order to eliminate any cross contamination.

## Tips

Our tips to assist you with allergen focused food preparation include:

- Understand all your ingredients. For example, pre-made dressings or marinades may include allergens such as fish sauce, peanut oil, anchovy extract or hydrolysed wheat protein
- Ensure all allergen related products are stored in a manner which prevents cross contamination. For example, nuts which are stored in uncovered containers may become airborne and contaminate allergen free meals
- Ensure stored allergen products are clearly labelled and always remember to read the label
- Keep food contact surfaces in a clean and sanitary condition
- Ensure all equipment is thoroughly washed and sanitised in between food preparation steps. Do not use the same piece of equipment on allergen and allergen free ingredients, without thoroughly washing equipment in between
- Ensure all allergen free meals are handled in a manner which avoids cross contamination, including when food is served to the customer
- Do not substitute ingredients for others that you are not familiar with
- Understand food preparation and cooking procedures
- Remember that heating and cooling food does not destroy allergens

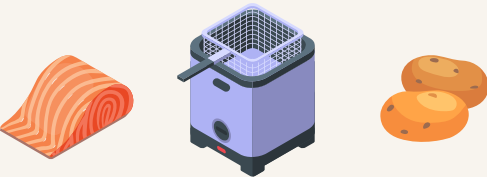
## Examples of food allergy cross contamination



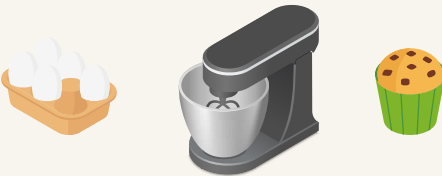
A chopping board or knife that has been used to prepare food with an allergen, then food without an allergen.



A chef preparing crustaceans (e.g. crab) then preparing a salad, without first washing hands thoroughly.



A deep fryer which was used to fry an allergen (i.e. fish) then used to fry a nonallergen (i.e. vegetables).



A baker preparing muffin mix that contains eggs, then using the same unwashed mixer to prepare muffin dough without eggs.



# Help minimise risks – Customer service

Customers may have a variety of reasons for enquiring about ingredients, such as food dislikes, intolerances or allergies.

It is important to effectively listen and communicate with your customer.  
Declare allergens or provide sufficient information so customers can make an educated decision about food they can consume.

**Remember**  
If in doubt, advise the customer of any uncertainty to allow them to make their own decision regarding their personal safety.



## Tips

Our tips to assist you with allergen focused customer service include:

- When a customer asks about ingredients in menu items, take notice if they use the terms allergy or allergen
- Listen to the customer to hear exactly what they are allergic to. This includes crustaceans, fish (including shellfish/ molluscs), peanuts, soybeans, tree nuts, sesame seeds, cows milk, egg, lupin, gluten and cereals containing gluten (wheat, rye, oats, barley and spelt)
- If you are unsure, ask the customer whether they are allergic to the ingredient or whether they dislike the ingredient. If someone is allergic to an ingredient, food preparation processes must be carefully controlled
- If someone states they are allergic to an ingredient, inform the customer of food preparation and plating processes
- Indicate on the menu if any items contain any common allergens
- Use prominent labels (i.e. in display fridges) identifying products which contain allergens
- Create a notification board back of house to help service staff familiarise themselves with any ingredient changes to menu items. Also display the completed allergen matrix and top 9 allergens card provided in this kit

# Case study

In February 2015, the City’s Health Services was notified of an individual who suffered an allergic reaction from the consumption of nuts whilst dining at a Subiaco restaurant.

The individual ordered a number of dishes from the menu, which did not indicate that they contained nuts. When the dishes were served, the individual declared their nut allergy to the manager and service staff. The service staff then asked the chef whether any of the dishes contained nuts and they confirmed the meals were nut free.

The individual suffered an allergic reaction whilst dining, showing symptoms such as abdominal pain, hoarse voice, difficulty breathing and throat tightness. The service staff unfortunately did not provide medical assistance. With the help of guests dining with the individual, they were admitted to a nearby emergency department and treated for anaphylaxis.

As a result of the incident, the City’s Health Services successfully prosecuted the food business under section 16 of the *Food Act 2008* as the food business did not demonstrate that they were allergen aware:

- The majority of staff had not undertaken allergen training
- Standard operating procedures to assist staff with allergen incidents were not developed
- The menu did not indicate whether allergens were present in any of the dishes

- Ingredient changes (which were undertaken during preparation of these dishes) were not disclosed to staff
- Although the chef made the dishes which contained nuts, they did not demonstrate any allergen awareness, when questioned by service staff
- Although dish recipes were accessible in the restaurant, the service staff was not aware and therefore did not check the recipes before responding

If the above mentioned was implemented, the service staff would have recognised the potentially fatal risk of a nut allergy and therefore could have given the customer accurate information. Sadly if the emergency department was not within close vicinity this may have resulted in a tragic and fatal outcome.



# Included in this allergen kit

The following documentation has been provided for implementation and display within your food business.

It is recommended to create one location where all this information is displayed to assist staff when a customer makes an allergy enquiry.

Remember, these are resources to help staff remain allergy focused – staff and management review must be demonstrated to achieve an allergy aware food business.



**An action Plan for Anaphylaxis<sup>7</sup>**

Display this in a prominent location within your food for staff to carefully follow should a customer experience an allergic reaction.



**Signs and Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction to Food<sup>8</sup>**

Display this in a prominent location within your food business to help staff identify signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction, and to help staff respond.



**Allergen Matrix**

Ask a relevant staff member (the chef is recommended) to complete this matrix for each menu item, and locate this in a prominent location within your food business.



**Top 10 Allergens to Consider in Australia**

Display this in a prominent location within your food business to help staff recognise the major allergens in Australia.

1 Osborne et al. Prevalence of challenge-proven IgE-mediated food allergy using population-based sampling and predetermined challenge criteria in infants. *J Allergy Clin Immunol* 2011; 127: 668-676

2 Department of Primary Industries, New South Wales Food Authority (2015). Declaring Allergens. [https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/Documents/retailfactsheets/declaring\\_allergens.pdf](https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/Documents/retailfactsheets/declaring_allergens.pdf)

3 Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia. Food Allergy Basics (2015). <https://www.allergyfacts.org.au/images/pdf/FOODALLERGYBASICS.pdf>

4 Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy. What is an allergy? (2010). [https://allergyfacts.org.au/images/pdf/what\\_is\\_allergy.pdf](https://allergyfacts.org.au/images/pdf/what_is_allergy.pdf)

5 Food Allergy Week. About food allergy, Incidence. <https://foodallergyeducation.org.au/>

6 Department of Human Services, Public Health Branch. Food Allergen and Intolerance Information Kit for Food Businesses (2009). Retrieved from <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety/food-businesses>

7 Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy. Action Plan for Anaphylaxis (2015). <https://www.allergy.org.au/hp/anaphylaxis/ascia-action-plan-for-anaphylaxis>

8 Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia. Signs and Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction to Food. <https://foodallergyeducation.org.au/basics>

9 Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy. Common myths about allergy and asthma exposed. (2015). <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/about-allergy/common-myths-about-allergy-and-asthma-exposed>





**City of Subiaco**

[Area]

6229 [0000]

[email]@subiaco.wa.gov.au

**subiaco.wa.gov.au**

This information is available in alternative  
formats upon request.