

Australia & New Zealand Consensus statement on best practice food allergen management 2025

Managing food allergies is
everyone's responsibility

Consensus statement on best practice food allergen management

We recognise that the safety of consumers living with food allergies is a shared responsibility. Consumers, manufacturers of packaged food, food service businesses, health professionals, food retailers, and regulatory and enforcement agencies all play a role.

We need to work together to manage food allergen risks and to support consumers in making informed decisions about the foods they choose to eat.

Consumers have a responsibility to:

1. Always have their emergency allergy medication with them.
2. Read food labels, including ingredient lists, allergen summary ("contains") statements and Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL) statements before buying and eating packaged foods.
3. Always clearly communicate their allergies when ordering food.
4. Ask about the allergen content of food and drinks when eating away from home.

Packaged food manufacturers have a responsibility to:

1. Apply industry best practice food allergen management.
2. Meet regulatory obligations for clear, consistent, and accurate allergen labelling to let consumers know about the allergens that are present in the food.
3. Apply best practice when deciding if a PAL statement is required:
 - Use a risk assessment process, such as the Allergen Bureau VITAL® program, to identify the quantity of unintentional allergens that may be present in the final product.
 - Remove unintentional allergen presence from the food supply chain or reduce it to the lowest possible level.
 - Use a PAL statement only if the risk assessment shows the product may be a risk to the consumer with food allergies.

Food service businesses and retailers have a responsibility to:

1. Make sure all food service staff have the necessary training, skills and knowledge to manage food allergen risks.
2. Follow best practice food allergen management when ordering, storing, preparing, and serving food and drinks.
3. Make sure that all staff understand their responsibility to:
 - Provide accurate information when telling consumers about the ingredients in the food and drinks they serve.
 - Only supply customers with the food and drinks they ask for.
 - Provide food and drink that does not contain the allergen, when they have agreed to provide allergen free food or drink to a consumer with a food allergy. That is, the allergen is not present in the food or drink, whether as an ingredient or unintentionally included.
4. Make sure staff have access to information about the allergen and ingredient content of food and drinks so they can give consumers accurate information about allergens when they ask.

Healthcare professionals who have patients with food allergy have a responsibility to:

1. Educate their patients, or refer them to appropriate healthcare professionals and evidence-based patient support organisations who can educate them in an appropriate way, about how to:
 - Identify food allergens in packaged and unpackaged foods.
 - Better understand PAL statements.
 - Manage food allergen risk when purchasing, storing, preparing, and serving food at home.
 - Understand the importance of always telling food service staff about their food allergy and asking about allergens in food and drinks when eating away from home.
 - Understand the level of risk and make informed decisions.
2. Healthcare professionals who provide education on allergen avoidance should make sure they understand how food allergen management in food service and food manufacturing is applied. This includes having a good understanding of mandatory food allergen labelling and the principles of risk assessments used to apply PAL statements. Ensure that consumers understand the PAL statements should be treated the same as allergen labelling.

Food safety regulators and enforcement agencies have a responsibility to:

1. Provide industry with accurate and relevant resources to help them improve food allergen management and uphold high standards in consumer food safety.
2. Clearly communicate allergen management obligations to food businesses when selling, serving, manufacturing and importing food.
3. Communicate to food businesses and consumers how they respond to, and investigate, reports of allergic reactions to foods, whether they are packaged, unpackaged, sold via assisted service or served ready to eat.
4. Communicate how they enforce compliance with food allergen management, including labelling requirements.
5. Apply an evidence-based approach to assessing the accuracy of a PAL statement.

Glossary:

A **food allergen** is a substance that causes an allergic reaction in a person with an allergy to that food. A person can be allergic to any food, not just the food allergens that must be declared under the mandatory labelling requirements of the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code.

Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL) statements are used by food manufacturers to warn consumers of the risk that an allergen may be present in a food through cross contact (also known as cross contamination). This can occur during the supply chain or manufacturing process. Examples of PAL statements include "may contain x" or "may be present: x."

Risk assessment in relation to precautionary allergen labelling (PAL) refers to a risk-based method used by food manufacturers to assess the impact of allergen cross contact in ingredients and their production process. If the level of allergen present could result in a reaction in a portion of consumers with that food allergy then a PAL statement should be applied.



The review and updating of this consensus statement was led by the National Allergy Council and is a collaboration between organisations representing public health, consumer advocacy, food manufacturers, food service industry, regulatory agencies and researchers. At the time of printing, the statement is endorsed by the National Allergy Council, Allergen Bureau, Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, Allergy NZ, Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology & Allergy, Dietitians NZ, National Allergy Centre of Excellence, Centre for Food Allergy Research, NSW Food Authority, Environmental Health Australia, Australian Food & Grocery Council, Australian Institute of Food Science & Technology, Australian Industry Group, Australian Culinary Federation, Restaurant & Caterers Association and Food & Beverage Importers Association. Version 1, May 2025.