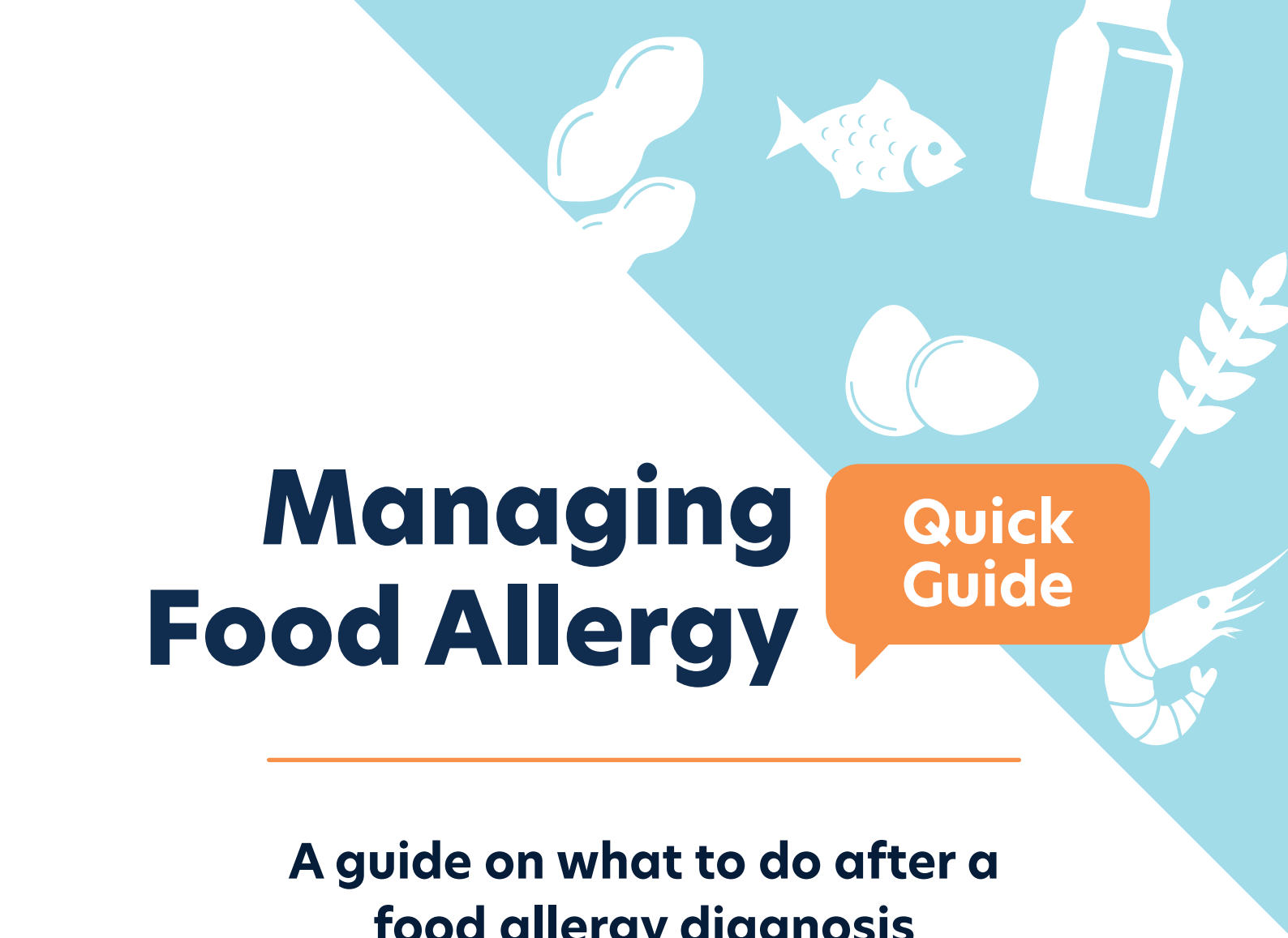




Managing Food Allergy

Quick Guide

A guide on what to do after a food allergy diagnosis

For information and support call our National Allergy Helpline



1300 728 000

or contact us through our website



allergyfacts.org.au



Allergy & Anaphylaxis
Australia

Your trusted charity for allergy support

So, you or your loved one has a food allergy – now what?

Finding out you or someone you care about has a food allergy can feel overwhelming at first. While there's a lot to learn, you're not alone. With the right support and information, managing your food allergy is possible.

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia is here to help. We're a trusted charity that supports people living with allergies. Our allergy educators are health professionals who can give you clear and reliable information and support.

You need to:



Know



Prepare



Act

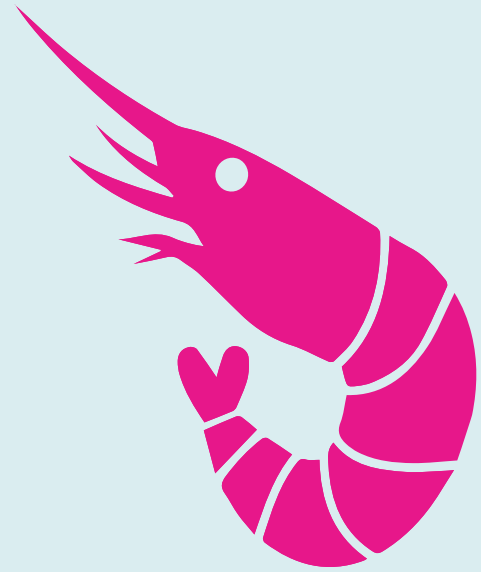


Reduce risk



Inform

This quick guide is on food allergy that can cause anaphylaxis, known as IgE mediated food allergy.





Diagnosis of food allergy

You may have already seen a clinical immunology/allergy specialist (we call them allergy specialists) or you may be waiting to see one. Allergy specialists are trained to diagnose, treat and manage patients with allergies.

Usually, your GP will refer you to an allergy specialist, but a nurse practitioner or other specialist can also refer you to an allergy specialist.

Find your closest allergy specialist by clicking your state on our interactive map or [locate a specialist on the ASCIA website](#).





Understanding allergy care

Other health professionals who can support you with managing your food allergy:



General Practitioner

Help people with general health, referrals, prescriptions and ASCIA Action Plans



Dietitian

Help people understand food allergy management and having a balanced, nutritious diet



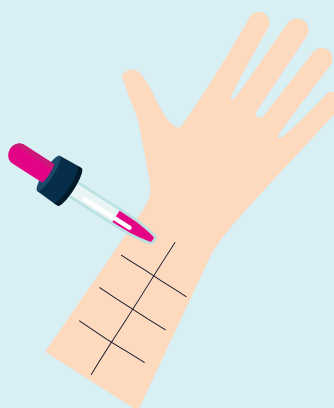
Psychologist

Help people understand more about a balanced approach to food allergy management, anxiety and mental health



Understanding Allergy Care

Visit our [Understanding Allergy Care](#) online hub to learn more on testing for food allergies and your allergy healthcare team.



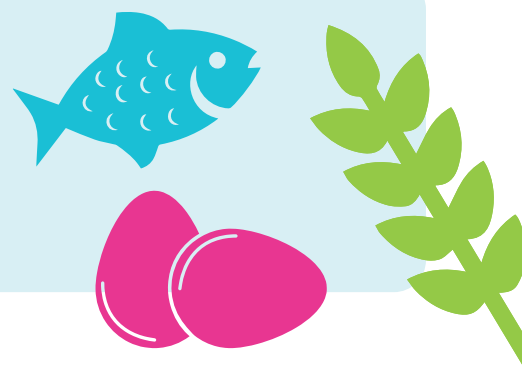
Allergy Tests

Allergy tests are used to help with diagnosis or to see if your allergies have changed. Tests are only part of the process of diagnosis and your clinical history (what has happened and the signs or symptoms you had or have) is also very important.



What is food allergy?

Food allergy occurs when a person's immune system reacts to a food that is harmless for most people. The food that causes a reaction is known as a food allergen. It is almost always the protein in the food that causes the person's immune system to react. **Any food** can cause an allergic reaction, including fruits, vegetables and chicken.



An allergic reaction usually happens within minutes after eating the food allergen but can take up to 2 hours to develop.

An allergic reaction can involve the gut, skin, airway, breathing and/or cardiovascular system (heart and blood pressure).

Signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction to food can be mild to moderate or severe (known as anaphylaxis). Anaphylaxis can be life threatening.

Mild or Moderate Allergic Reaction



Swelling of face, eyes

Tingling in the mouth
Swelling of the lips



Hives or welts
(anywhere on the body)



Stomach pain, vomiting
(NOTE: These are signs of anaphylaxis for insect allergy)

Severe Allergic Reaction (Anaphylaxis)

Persistent dizziness
Collapse
Pale and floppy (young children)



Swelling of tongue
Difficulty talking or hoarse voice



Difficult or noisy breathing
Wheeze or persistent cough



Swelling or tightness in throat



If someone with known asthma and food, insect or medication allergy has sudden breathing difficulty, **give adrenaline device FIRST**, then asthma reliever puffer



Your ASCIA Action Plan

An **ASCIA Action Plan** is an **emergency plan** for people with food allergy. It helps you to understand if an allergic reaction is **mild to moderate or severe**, and tells you **what to do in an emergency**.



Have at least one adrenaline device (if prescribed) and your ASCIA Action Plan with you

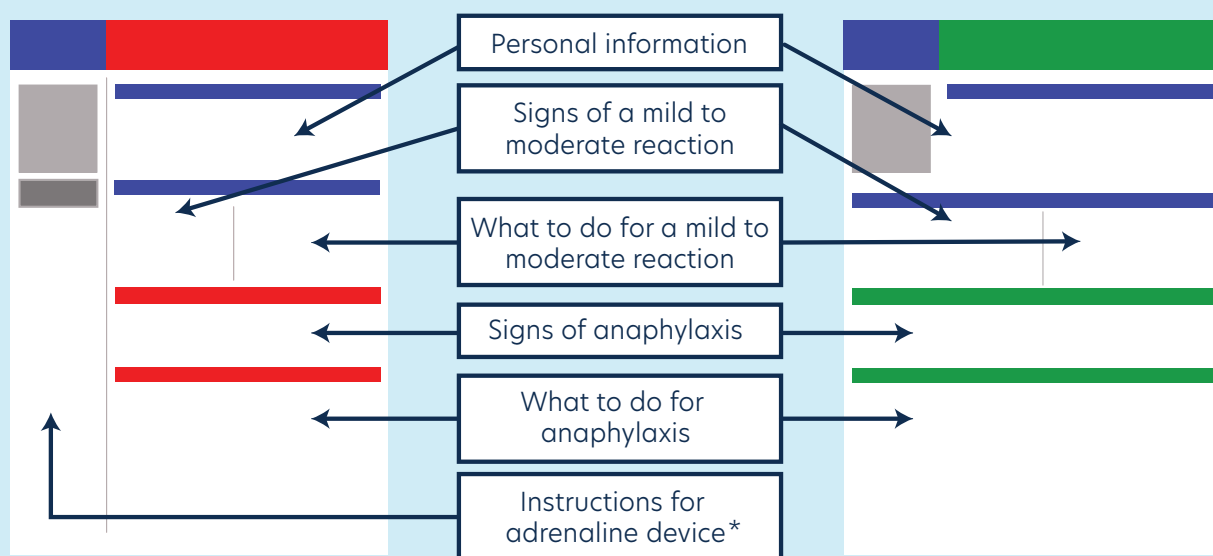
There are 2 types of ASCIA Action Plans for people with food allergy. How to recognise an allergic reaction and what to do is the same on both ASCIA Action Plans.

The ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis (red)

for people prescribed an adrenaline device

The ASCIA Action Plan for Allergic reactions (green)

for people who are not prescribed an adrenaline device



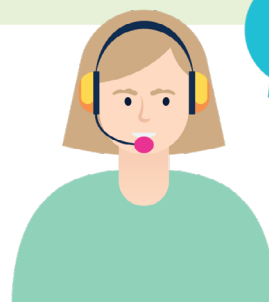
*Some ASCIA Action Plans have the instructions on the back page

Key things to remember:

- Always keep a copy of the ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis with the adrenaline device/s.
- It should be reviewed and updated when new adrenaline devices are prescribed or about every 12 to 18 months.
- Give a copy of your child's ASCIA Action Plan to the school or childcare. Use a recent photo.
- Take the ASCIA Action Plan and adrenaline device to the person if they are having an allergic reaction.



Learn more about [ASCIA Action Plans](#) and what they are.





Adrenaline (epinephrine) devices

An **adrenaline device** is a **life-saving** medicine used to treat **anaphylaxis**. **Each device** contains **one** dose of adrenaline. There are different types of adrenaline devices.

Adrenaline acts **quickly** to reverse the dangerous symptoms of anaphylaxis.



- ✓ **Take** your prescription to the pharmacy/chemist as soon as possible
- ✓ **Learn** how to use your device
- ✓ **Anyone** can use an adrenaline device in an emergency. Always have **at least one** adrenaline device and a copy of the ASCIA Action Plan where the person who has food allergy is (such as at school, home, workplace, sports field, park) so it can be used quickly in an emergency.
- ✓ **Tell others**, such as family, carers or workmates, where the adrenaline device and ASCIA Action Plan are kept.
- ✓ Childcare or school should have one of your child's adrenaline devices while they are there.
- ✓ **Practice giving the adrenaline device by** using a trainer device. You can buy a trainer device that has no medication through our A&AA Shop.

Remember: Keep it where you would “keep” a person:

Do store it:



Where is it easy to get but out of reach of small children



In a cool, shaded place when outside

Don't store it:



In a locked cupboard



In the fridge - too cold



In a car - too hot



Directly on ice or an ice pack - too cold



Learn more about adrenaline devices and how to give one:

[About adrenaline devices](#)



How to manage anaphylaxis



For any one sign of anaphylaxis

Take the ASCIA Action Plan and adrenaline device to the person.
Do NOT let them stand or walk.

Follow instructions on the ASCIA Action Plan.

1

Lay flat

Lay the person flat or sit them with the legs outstretched
Do NOT let them stand or walk.
Help them keep calm.



2

Give adrenaline device (if available)

Instructions on how to give different adrenaline devices may be found:

- on the device itself
- in or on the pack or box
- on the ASCIA Action Plan (this may be a QR code)

3



TRIPLE ZERO
000

Call an ambulance triple zero - (000)

Stay with the person, try to be calm and speak with them until the ambulance arrives.

4

Call the person's emergency contact.

5

Another adrenaline device may be given after 5 minutes if there has been no improvement or the person is more unwell.

6



The ambulance is to take the person to hospital

They need to stay in hospital for at least 4 hours for treatment and in case they become very unwell again.



If in doubt, give the adrenaline device.

It is safer to give the adrenaline device and it not be needed, than give it too late when the person is very unwell.



Asthma or anaphylaxis?

Many people mistake breathing difficulties in anaphylaxis for asthma because asthma and some signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis can be similar.

ALWAYS give the adrenaline device **FIRST**, and then asthma reliever puffer, if the person has asthma and food allergy and suddenly has trouble breathing (wheeze, cough, hoarse voice), even if there's no rash or swelling.

Other important things to remember if having anaphylaxis:



Do NOT shower

This can increase the risk of collapse because of a sudden drop in blood pressure.



Antihistamines don't prevent or treat anaphylaxis.

Use an adrenaline device.



Being prepared and knowing these steps can save a life.



Reading food labels

People with food allergies and those who care for them should check the ingredient list and all allergen statements when buying packaged food and drinks.

A&AA recommends checking the label 3 times:



At the shop before buying



When unpacking the groceries



Before eating or cooking with the product

Be aware that ingredients, how the food is made, and where the food is made can change without warning. Something that was safe the last time you checked it might not be safe the next time you buy it. Check every product, every time. If you buy several of the one product at the one time, check all products.

In Australia, **common food allergens** must be clearly listed in the ingredient list on packaged food and non-alcoholic drinks. This is called Plain English Allergen Labelling (PEAL).

Common food allergens must be:

- written in bold in the ingredients list
- listed in the summary statement which starts with the word "Contains..."

Note: the labelling of alcoholic drinks is different to food and other drinks. People must always tell staff about their food allergy when ordering alcohol and call the alcohol company for clear information on food allergens in alcohol.

Common allergaens include:



Almond



Brazil nut



Cashew



Hazelnut



Macadamia



Pecan



Pine nut



Pistachio



Walnut



Peanut



Egg



Milk/dairy



Sesame



Soy



Mollusc



Fish



Crustacea



Lupin

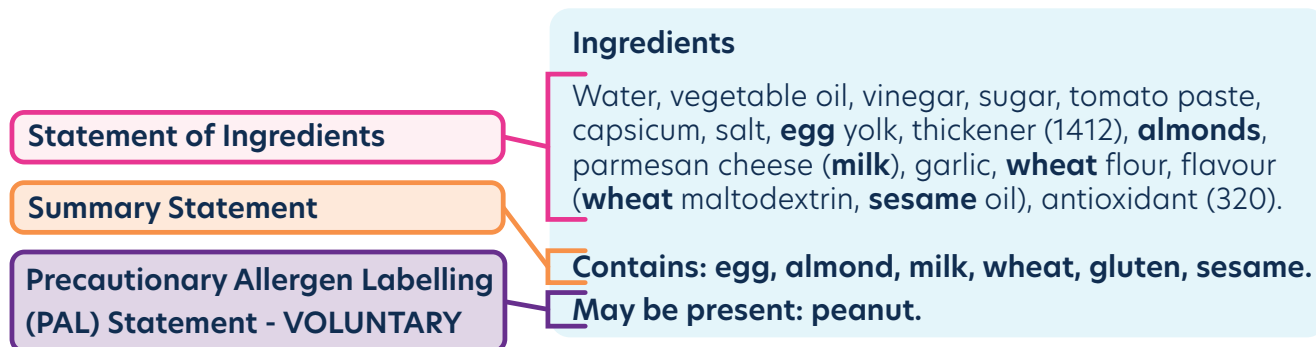


Wheat

Uncommon food allergens are listed differently. For more information see [Uncommon food allergens](#).



This is an example of how foods should be labelled:



Source: December 2024 Food Industry Guide to Allergen Management and Labelling for Australia and New Zealand

What are Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL) statements?

Statements such as “May contain” or “May be present” are called **Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL) statements**.

In Australia, PAL statements are:

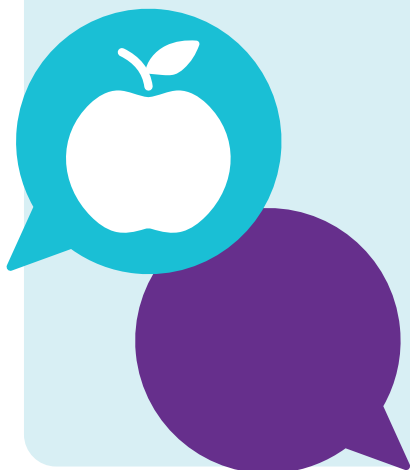
- **Not required by law**
- **Voluntary** (food companies can decide whether they put a PAL statement on the packaged food or not)
- **Used differently by different food companies.**

There is no way to tell which company has done a careful risk assessment by just reading an ingredient list or a PAL statement.

The PAL statement should not be ignored as the product could be a risk to someone with food allergy. It's a good idea to:

- **Talk to your allergy specialist or allergy dietitian** about eating foods with PAL statements and the risks when eating food that has a PAL statement.
- **Contact the food company** if you're unsure about the risk. Ask why they have a PAL statement on their product.
- **Learn more about PAL statements - watch the animations on the [Food Allergy Aware website](#)**

Learn more about [reading food labels](#) on our website.





Storing, preparing and cooking food at home

You do not need to remove the food allergen from your home but some families with young children may choose to do this to help increase safety and reduce stress at home.

Here are some ideas to help reduce risk:

Use a separate shelf in the pantry and fridge to keep food for the person with allergy

- Use a high shelf to reduce the risk of other foods spilling on it
- Use a basket/tub/container if you don't have space for a whole shelf or have more than one person in the family with food allergy. Put the family member's name on the container or the shelf so they are reminded which food is their food



Keep foods in their original packaging if possible

- So you can check ingredients
- Clearly label clean containers if storing food in them

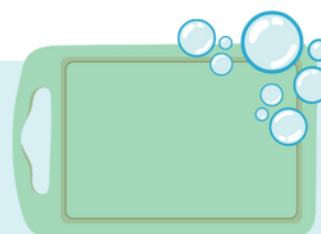


Wash your hands and dry them with a paper towel or a clean cloth

- Before cooking and during cooking as needed
- If you have touched an allergen
- Before eating

Clean benches and surfaces

- Use warm soapy water
- Clean up spills straight away with a clean cloth or paper towel



Keep kitchen equipment clean

- Make sure no food has stuck on
- Use hot soapy water or the dishwasher



Use separate kitchen equipment if it is difficult to clean.

Examples:

- Separate coloured chopping board for person with food allergy
- Separate toaster for person with wheat allergy
- Separate blender for the person with a milk allergy



Cook meal for person with food allergy first if you are cooking different meals

Use a colour as a reminder or alert

- Separate coloured plate or cup for each child with food allergy
- Coloured cloths for wiping faces and hands of young children
- Coloured storage containers
- Coloured stickers on packaged food



Serve the person with food allergy first to avoid mistakes.

Try not to do too many things at once when cooking for the person with food allergy.

You need to think about what you are doing - not bringing in the washing, helping with homework or talking on the phone while cooking.



For more information on cooking and eating at home, visit:

[Cooking and Eating at Home - Food Allergy Aware](#)



Eating out with food allergy

Eating out can feel stressful if you have a food allergy, but with good planning and clear communication, you can feel more confident and reduce the risk of an allergic reaction.



Top tips:

- 1 Try not to go to restaurants or cafes that use a lot of the foods you're allergic to.
- 2 Always tell the staff about your allergy when ordering, even if you've ordered the same meal before at the same place.
- 3 Never eat or drink without having your adrenaline device/s (if prescribed) and ASCIA Action Plan with you.

Only asking if a food or meal has an ingredient in it is not the same as telling staff about your food allergy.
Use words like:

"I have an allergy to [your allergen]. Is this meal safe for me?"

or

"I have an allergy to [your allergen]. Can you make this meal without the allergen?"



You can use our **chef card** to help you tell staff about your food allergy.

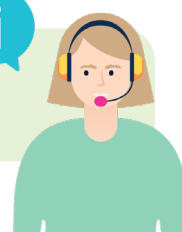
If you tell food service staff about your food allergy and they agree to serve you, they must make sure your meal **does NOT contain your food allergen(s)**.

If food isn't labelled, such as at a bakery, deli (delicatessen) or café, staff must give you the correct information about common allergens when you ask.

If you have an uncommon food allergy and you tell staff about your food allergy, and they serve you food, the food they serve you must not contain the food you are allergic to.



Learn more tips here:
[Ten tips for eating out with food allergy](#)
[Eating out with uncommon food allergy](#)





Talking to others about food allergy

It is important to talk with family, friends, teachers, carers or work colleagues about your/your child's food allergy to help them understand and support you.

Things to talk about:

What food you/your child is allergic to and the need to avoid it.

Safer preparation and serving of food.

Where your adrenaline device and ASCIA Action Plan are kept, and how to recognise and treat an allergic reaction, including anaphylaxis.

You or your child may bring food that does not contain the allergen/s to share with others.

You/your child may not share food others prepare and might bring your own.

A place you prefer to eat when eating out.



Free online training available

- [ASCIA anaphylaxis e-training](#) to learn about recognising and treating anaphylaxis
- [Food Allergen Training](#) to understand about food allergen management when preparing food

Schools and childcare:

- Give the school or childcare a copy of your child's ASCIA Action Plan, adrenaline device (if prescribed), other medication
- Work with staff to complete an individualised anaphylaxis care plan



Managing Food Allergy

Checklist



Know

✓ About food allergy

- Have your diagnosis medically confirmed
- Who can support you
- What your/your child's allergens are
- What foods contain or may have your/your child's allergen in it
- Signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction, including anaphylaxis



Prepare

✓ ASCIA Action Plan

- Know your ASCIA Action Plan. Read it and understand how to use it to guide you when an allergic reaction happens
- Keep a copy of your ASCIA Action Plan with the adrenaline device/s

✓ Adrenaline devices

- Take the prescription to the pharmacy/chemist and get your adrenaline device/s
- Learn how to use your adrenaline device
- Always keep at least one adrenaline device and a copy of the ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis with the person who has food allergy.
- Give childcare or school one of your child's adrenaline devices with a copy of their ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis
- Store adrenaline devices correctly



Act

✓ In an emergency

- Follow the instructions on the ASCIA Action Plan
- Lay person flat. If breathing is difficult, allow to sit on the ground with legs outstretched.
- Give the adrenaline device.
- Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- Do not allow the person to stand or walk
- If no response after 5 minutes or the person is more unwell give another adrenaline device, if available.



Reduce Risk

✓ Eating out

- Always tell the staff about your food allergy clearly when ordering food, even if you have ordered the same meal before.
- Use a chef card to help you tell staff about your food allergy
- Never eat or drink without having your adrenaline device/s (if prescribed) with you.

✓ Storing, preparing and cooking

- Read packaged food and drink labels - ingredients, allergen summary statements, precautionary allergen labelling statements- every time
- Store food for person with allergy on a high shelf
- Use labels and colours as reminders
- Clean carefully and wash your hands when preparing and cooking food
- Prepare food for the person with food allergy first
- Serve food to the person with food allergy first.



Inform

✓ Tell others about food allergy

- What foods need to be avoided
- How to prepare and serve food to help reduce risk
- Where your/your child's adrenaline device and ASCIA Action Plan are kept, and how to recognise and treat an allergic reaction
- Give schools and childcare a copy of your child's ASCIA Action Plan and adrenaline device (if prescribed). Make an individualised anaphylaxis care plan together.

Resources

Stay connected and informed with Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia

Visit our website to find helpful tips and resources for food allergy



Subscribe to Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia

When you subscribe you can choose to receive:

- Email updates with reliable, up-to-date allergy information
- Food alerts when a food is recalled
- Invitations to events, such as webinars
- Updates about the latest allergy research, resources, treatments and management of daily life with food allergy



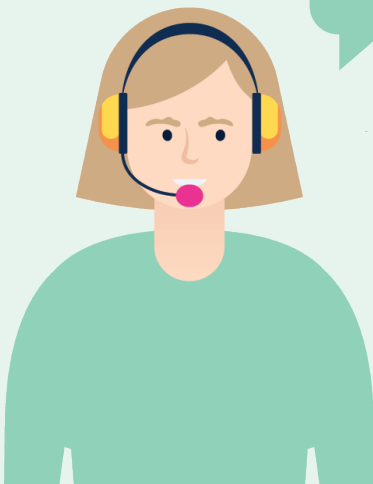
Need Support?

Contact the National Allergy Helpline

 1300 728 000

or contact us through our website

 allergyfacts.org.au



Connect with Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia on social media



Stay up to date, share your experiences, and be part of a supportive allergy community by following A&AA on:



**Allergy & Anaphylaxis
Australia**



@allergicaustralia



**Allergy & Anaphylaxis
Australia**

Just search Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia on your favourite platform and click "Follow" or "Like."

**We're here to support you
every step of the way.**



