

Food Technology and Hospitality Lessons in Secondary School settings

Management of food allergy in food technology or hospitality classes is a shared responsibility. Students with food allergy need to learn how to prepare food for themselves and others. Strategies need to be used by school staff, the parent and the student with food allergy. A general increase in awareness of food allergy of all students will also help in reducing the risk of an allergic reaction triggered by food during class activities and at school.

Risk minimisation where the student with food allergy is in a food technology/hospitality/cooking class.

Strategies for school staff:

- Before the student commences Food Technology (FT), make an appointment to see the parent/guardian of the student with food allergy and the student.

This will allow time to make changes that may be needed for the student with food allergy.

Find out what the student is allergic to. The most common allergens include cow's milk (dairy), egg, peanut, tree nuts (e.g. cashew, almond), shellfish, fish, soy, sesame and wheat. Although these 9 foods are the cause of 90% of food allergies, any food can cause an allergic reaction (e.g. kiwi fruit, banana, mushrooms, celery).

The FT teacher/coordinator should tell the parent/guardian of the student with food allergy and the student of lesson plans (e.g. theory and practical class lessons).

- Information about curriculum and menu items should be shared with the parent/guardian of student with food allergy and the student.

The parent/guardian/student can help identify high risk foods and suggest suitable options for the class group and/or the student with food allergy. At times, it may be easier for the student with food allergy, other students and the teacher to change a menu item because the level of risk is too high (e.g. making a meat lovers pizza instead of a seafood pizza if there is a student in the class with fish or shellfish allergy)

The parent/guardian of the student with food allergy and the student themselves, should check ingredient labels and any allergen statements of foods used in FT classes. Labels should be read and it should be decided if they are suitable. If some foods are unsuitable because they contain an allergen as an ingredient or a precautionary allergen statement (such as "may contain peanuts"), the parent/guardian should purchase appropriate replacement items for the student with food allergy to use.

- The FT teacher should make sure storage of these items is correct to minimise the risk of cross contamination with other ingredients. This includes the items being clearly labelled in well-sealed containers. Ingredient labels should be kept with the products.
- The student with food allergy must avoid using foods they are allergic to, and strategies must be used to avoid contact with spills and contaminated food processors, utensils, work benches etc.

- Examples of how menu items can be changed and the risk reduced include:
 1. Instead of making fish cakes which are a high-risk food for a student with fish allergy, the class could make rissoles containing meat.
 2. Instead of making cookies containing nuts, students could be educated about food allergy and the nuts could be replaced with a substitute ingredient such as sunflower seeds or sultanas.
- Particularly in secondary school where students are generally more aware of their food allergy, other students can use some allergens such as milk, egg and wheat if good risk minimisation strategies are used.
- School staff should encourage students with food allergy to read ingredient labels before food preparation starts. Part of recipe planning can be to find alternative ingredients to replace high risk allergen ingredients. School staff should also check ingredient labels for student's allergens.
- Peanuts, tree nuts and sesame (and their oils) should not be used in FT kitchens because they can be easily removed or substituted (e.g. olive or canola oil). As part of FT education, students can be told that these ingredients can be used when cooking for people who do not have allergies to the foods.
- If possible, students with food allergy should have a large storage container with their own equipment (mixing bowls, saucepans, measuring cups, utensils etc). A used set of required equipment can be washed in hot soapy water or a dishwasher and packed in a labelled container for each student with food allergy. This may be particularly useful for students with allergies to common foods such as wheat, egg and milk that are used in FT classes.
- Students with food allergy need to be considered when planning workstations. Students should not be isolated, however placing a student with an allergy to egg, wheat, milk or almond away from the workstation/s that may include this/these ingredient/s is a simple risk minimisation strategy that can be used.
- All students need to be aware of student/s with food allergy and the care that needs to be taken to help prevent allergen contamination of food as well as behaviours that may increase the risk of allergic reactions. These include behaviours such as poor food handling, food fights, taste testing dishes as well as licking of raw mixtures from bowls and utensils.
- Students who have prepared food during FT classes should be made aware of the dangers of sharing this food in the playground with other students with food allergy. These foods do not have a label listing the ingredients and students with food allergy may eat these foods without first asking about the ingredients.
- The school, parents and students with food allergy must discuss appropriate consumption of the food prepared by the student with food allergy - whether it can be consumed at school or the prepared food taken home.

Helpful Resources

A&AA (Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia) Food Allergen Cards:

<https://allergyfacts.org.au/allergy-anaphylaxis/food-allergens>

All about Allergens for Schools free online training – this should be completed by teachers and FT students:

<https://foodallergytraining.org.au/>

National Allergy Council food allergy videos covering the topics food storage, food preparation, reading labels, precautionary allergen labelling statements and unlabelled foods:

<https://nationalallergystrategy.org.au/resources/food-service/food-allergy-videos>

For more information on food allergen management visit www.allergyfacts.org.au or call 1300 728 000.