



Discussion Guide

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis.

FACT:

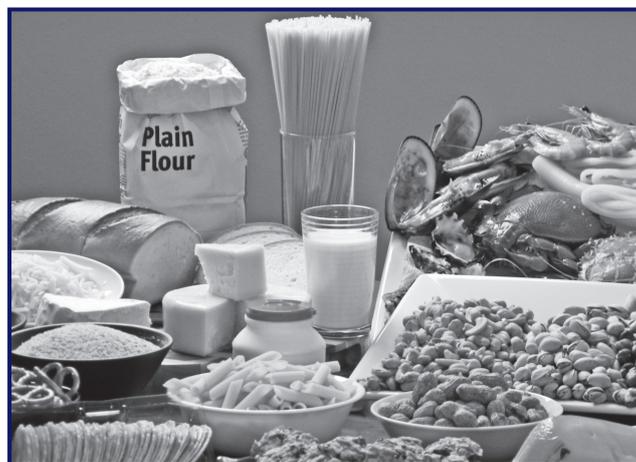
We all have a responsibility when it comes to reducing the risk of food allergic reactions and anaphylaxis.

Many in the food service industry are rightly nervous about a customer disclosing a severe food allergy as they order a snack or a meal in their café, restaurant or club.

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA) is a national not for profit organisation that supports anyone i.e. individual, parents, schools, chefs, food service establishments and health professionals etc having to manage severe food allergy. Anaphylaxis is a serious, rapid onset, allergic reaction that may cause death. Those who have been diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis carry an Action Plan for Anaphylaxis (instruction sheet signed by the doctor) and life saving adrenaline in the form of an auto injector called an EpiPen® with them at all times in case of an emergency.

The foods that trigger 90% of food allergic reactions in Australia are peanuts, tree nuts (e.g. cashew, almond), milk, egg, soy, wheat, sesame, fish and shellfish. However it is important to note that almost any food can trigger an allergic reaction in an individual. The organisation has members allergic to foods such as kiwi fruit, banana, mushroom and even rice. The increase in prevalence of food allergy over recent years is of concern to everyone in the food service industry and the community at large. There is no current cure for food allergy; avoidance of the food trigger is crucial.

Research has shown that whilst most first time reactions happen in the home, food prepared or eaten away from the usual safe haven of home has been documented to cause most life threatening allergic reactions and indeed, fatal allergic reactions.



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So what can you do to reduce the risk of food allergic reactions in your establishment?

Safety is all about increasing awareness and education. Patrons/customers have a legal right to be able to access accurate information on food content. (See Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Food Standards Code -- www.foodstandards.gov.au)

Responsibilities lie with both the individual with food allergy and food service staff. It is important that all are educated about the risk of severe allergic reactions and how to best manage that risk.

Many anaphylactic reactions happen in Australian restaurants, hotels, café's etc. Whilst the packaged food industry has been working toward safer food choices for allergic consumers through the Allergen Forum (Allergen Bureau- www.allergenbureau.net), there is a huge need for education of the food service area.

A&AA is not asking for guarantees of safe food but we do ask for cooperation in educating those at the front line – our food service personnel and allergic consumers. With simple steps in place, the risk of a severe allergic reaction is greatly reduced. We can never say a reaction won't happen but we can minimise the risk and ALWAYS be prepared in case an accidental allergic reaction occurs. It is not possible to totally remove food allergens from any environment.

Those at risk of anaphylaxis **MUST ALWAYS** carry their life saving medication with them. Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia says " No Adrenaline/epinephrine – No Eat"

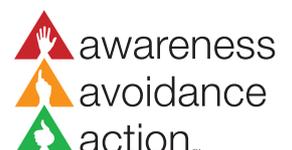


Lip swelling caused by contact with tree nuts



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Signs and symptoms during a severe allergic reaction

The way forward

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia encourages members of the food service industry to become 'allergy aware' facilities. Those who make up the menus, purchase supplies, take orders, cook food and serve food need to understand that food allergy must be taken seriously.

More information? See Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia's Food Service Kit. \$45 buys you an informative kit including an interactive CD ROM to educate your staff, posters and flyers for your facility and importantly, a booklet with easy to understand information that will help you become an 'allergy aware' facility. Food safety is not just about bacteria. Food allergy is real and we need to work together for the safety of the allergic consumer and the staff in your facility.

Don't wait for an incident to become informed, be proactive and become allergy aware now. Do what you can to assist A&AA in increasing awareness throughout the Australian food service industry. Visit www.allergyfacts.org.au for more information.

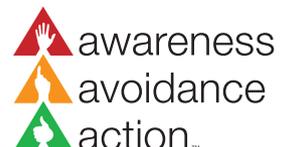
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