

Welcoming Guests With Food Allergies



*A comprehensive program for training staff
to safely prepare and serve food to
guests who have food allergies*



The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network

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INTRODUCTION

Scientists estimate that 4 percent of the population, or about 12 million Americans, suffer from food allergies. At the present time, there is no cure for a food allergy. Avoidance is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction.

When a person eats a food he or she is allergic to, a reaction may move swiftly throughout the body, causing a range of symptoms that can include swelling of the lips, tongue, and throat, difficulty breathing, hives, abdominal cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea.



People with severe food allergies may experience anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction that may result in a drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, and even death. Food-allergy-related reactions account for an estimated 30,000 emergency room visits and between 150 and 200 deaths each year.

When individuals with food allergies dine away from home, they must rely on food service staff to provide them with accurate information about ingredients so that they can make an informed decision about what to order. Incorrect or incomplete information puts these individuals at risk for an allergic reaction. Even a mild reaction will bring their dining experience to an abrupt end; a serious reaction may require transport to the hospital in an ambulance.

Education, cooperation, and teamwork are the keys to safely serving a guest who has food allergies. All food service staff – including restaurant managers, servers, and kitchen staff – must become familiar with the issues surrounding food allergies and the proper way to answer guests' questions. Further, they must know what to do if an allergic reaction occurs.

Surveys of members of the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN), a national nonprofit organization, indicate that an individual's restricted diet influences the shopping and dining out habits of the entire family and many of their close friends. When these families find a product or restaurant that they like and trust, they become loyal customers and encourage others to patronize these manufacturers and establishments. So although food allergies affect as many as 12 million Americans, the impact on restaurant patronage is much greater.

How to Use This Guide

This guide provides general information about food allergies. Targeted sections contain specific information for managers, front-of-the-house staff, and back-

of-the-house staff and strategies to help them successfully fulfill their role in ensuring a safe dining experience for guests with food allergies.

Education, cooperation, and teamwork are the keys to safely serving a guest who has a food allergy.

This program was developed primarily for traditional style restaurants but also may be useful for operators of quick-service restaurants. Take the information presented here and adapt it to your establishment's needs. Be sure to provide staff with updated ingredient information as menu items change, and make staff training and retraining a top priority.

Share appropriate sections, such as the Front of the House and Back of the House sections, with your staff. Ask employees to complete the quizzes at the end of each section to gauge their level of understanding about food allergies and their ability to handle an order placed by a diner who has a food allergy. Case reviews following each of these sections outline real-life experiences of guests with food allergies and can be used as a discussion tool in training staff.

The Appendix contains a number of useful tools. Use the reproducible consumer handout "Food Allergy Basics for Consumers" to educate your guests and show your commitment to their well-being. The "How to Read a Label Sheet" educates guests and staff alike about terms they may find in ingredient labels. The "Diner With Food Allergies?" card is a handy reference tool for staff about the correct procedures to use with guests who have food allergies. Finally, posters in both English and Spanish are included that remind staff to review ingredients and avoid cross-contact during food preparation.

Remember that you and the guest who has food allergies are both working toward the same goal: preventing an allergic reaction in your establishment.

Managing food allergies in a food service establishment requires a partnership between the guest and the restaurant staff. Working together, you can prevent allergic reactions.

Creating a Food Allergy Management Plan in Your Restaurant

Restaurant staff must keep in mind that food allergies are allergic disorders, not food preferences. The best way to minimize risks for your establishment and to your guests is to create a written plan for handling guests with food allergies that all staff members must follow.

When creating your plan, consider the following questions:

- ◆ Who will answer guests' questions regarding menu items?
- ◆ Who will be responsible for checking the ingredients used in menu items?

- ◆ What steps should the kitchen staff follow to avoid cross-contact?
- ◆ How should staff members handle an allergic reaction?

It only takes a few extra minutes to handle a special request or to answer questions from a guest with food allergies. This is time well spent, as it could prevent situations all restaurateurs would rather avoid, such as a lawsuit or an allergic reaction that results in an ambulance arriving at the restaurant during peak dining hours. The Risk Management section provides guidance in creating a food allergy management program for your restaurant.

Quick-Service Establishments and Drive-Thrus

Some restaurants have company standards that staff must adhere to regarding timeliness of service. A cook or server who feels rushed to meet such standards



may be more likely to take a shortcut that could result in an allergic reaction. Let employees know that when they are preparing food for a guest who has a food allergy, they may take a bit more time to ensure that a mistake is not made. Staff should verify the order to avoid making mistakes. If there is a mistake, they must discard the dish and make a new one.

Guests with food allergies usually prefer to speak with employees face-to-face about their needs, but some may prefer the convenience of a drive-thru window. Develop a plan for handling special orders placed via the drive-

thru window. Employees should refer all questions and/or special requests at the drive-thru to a shift manager. You may want to suggest that guests with special requests come inside to discuss ingredients and review a menu.

Special Events

Your allergy management plan should also apply to food you provide off-site (e.g., for catered events, picnics, weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs).

Practice Makes Perfect

Food allergy training is a process that requires regular review, especially of procedures for handling an allergy emergency. Be sure new employees understand your food allergy policy, and train them to take food allergies seriously. Include food allergy information in your new-hire orientation. Provide information via brochures, videos, and posters. Develop a checklist of discussion points that managers can review with new employees before they begin serving guests.

OVERVIEW OF FOOD ALLERGY AND ANAPHYLAXIS

Points to Remember

- ◆ About 4 percent of the U.S. population – 12 million Americans – have a food allergy.
- ◆ Milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat account for 90 percent of all food allergy reactions.
- ◆ Seafood allergies affect 6.9 million Americans.
- ◆ Peanut and tree nut allergies affect 3.3 million Americans.
- ◆ There is no cure for a food allergy; strict avoidance of the allergy-causing food is the only way to prevent a reaction.
- ◆ A severe or life-threatening allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis (pronounced *ana-fil-axis*).
- ◆ An estimated 30,000 emergency room visits and 150 to 200 deaths a year result from food allergy reactions.
- ◆ Even a trace amount of an allergy-causing food is enough to trigger an allergic reaction in some people.

Frequently Asked Questions About Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis

What is a food allergy?

A food allergy is an immune system response to a food that the body mistakenly believes is harmful. Once the immune system decides that a particular food is harmful, it creates specific antibodies to fight it.

The next time the individual eats that food, the immune system releases massive amounts of chemicals, including histamine, in order to protect the body. These chemicals trigger a cascade of allergic symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin, and/or cardiovascular system. Reactions can be deadly.

What is food intolerance, and how is it different from food allergy?

Food intolerance is a reaction that, unlike food allergy, does not involve the immune system. Instead, it involves the digestive system, and the body simply lacks the mechanism or enzyme needed to digest and process a particular food properly.

Lactose intolerance is the most common food intolerance. In this case, the individual lacks an enzyme that is needed to digest milk sugar.

When the lactose-intolerant person eats milk products, symptoms such as gas, bloating, and abdominal pain may occur; however, if the individual consumes only a small amount of dairy products, he or she may not experience these symptoms. Additionally, there are pills or drops that can be taken before eating dairy products that will replace the missing enzyme, thereby enabling the individual to consume dairy products without side effects.

What is gluten intolerance?

Gluten intolerance, also called “celiac sprue,” is caused by the body’s inability to break down gliadin, a protein in wheat. Symptoms of gluten intolerance can include severe abdominal pain and diarrhea, and these symptoms can occur six or more hours after a food is consumed. As a result, it is often difficult to pinpoint the food that caused the reaction. Individuals with gluten intolerance must avoid all gluten-containing flours, including wheat, barley, rye, and oat.

What foods cause food allergies?

Although an individual could be allergic to any food, the following eight foods account for 90 percent of all food-allergic reactions:

- **Peanuts**
- **Fish** (for example, salmon, cod, tuna)
- **Shellfish** (for example, crab, lobster, shrimp)
- **Milk**
- **Tree nuts** (for example, walnuts, pecans, almonds, cashews, pistachio nuts)
- **Soy**
- **Eggs**
- **Wheat**

Some experts recommend that patients who are allergic to peanuts avoid tree nuts, and vice versa, as an extra precaution.

Peanuts are the leading cause of severe allergic reactions in the United States, followed by shellfish, fish, tree nuts, and eggs. Some reports suggest that fish and shellfish are likely to be the leading cause of food allergy in adults. For some people, just a trace amount of the offending food can cause an allergic reaction.

A peanut is not a nut. It is a legume that grows underground. Examples of nuts that grow on trees include walnuts, pecans, and almonds. Some experts recommend that patients who are allergic to peanuts avoid tree nuts – and that patients who are allergic to tree nuts avoid peanuts – as an extra precaution.

A peanut is not a nut. It is a legume that grows underground. Examples of nuts that grow on trees include walnuts, pecans, and almonds.

Sesame seeds are not considered one of the major allergens in the United States, but they have been known to cause severe allergic reactions. They are included on the list of major allergens in other countries, including Canada. Poppy seeds and sunflower seeds also have been known to cause allergic reactions in some individuals. You may find that some consumers are avoiding seeds in addition to peanuts or nuts. However, at this time, seeds are not among the major allergens.

What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction?

Typical symptoms of an allergic reaction can include the following:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Skin | Hives, eczema, swelling of the lips and face, itching |
| Respiratory tract | Swelling of the throat or mouth, difficulty breathing, stuffy and/or runny nose, itchy and/or watery eyes, wheezing, repetitive cough |
| Gastrointestinal tract | Abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea |

Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Reactions can occur within a few minutes to up to two hours after eating an offending food.

What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe reaction that is rapid in onset and potentially life-threatening. Symptoms can include all of those previously noted, as well as cardiovascular symptoms such as drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, or even death.

It is estimated that 150 to 200 people die each year from food-allergic reactions. Many of these deaths occur as a result of severe swelling of the airway.



How is a reaction treated?

Mild reactions are usually treated with an antihistamine such as Benadryl®. The medication of choice for controlling a severe or anaphylactic reaction is epinephrine, also called adrenaline. It is available by prescription in an autoinjector, either EpiPen® or Twinject® (pictured at left), and should be administered promptly in the event of a reaction.

If a guest in your restaurant is having an anaphylactic reaction, notify a manager and get help immediately. Call the rescue squad (911) and tell them that someone is having a severe allergic reaction.

Who is at risk?

An estimated 12 million Americans, or 4 percent of the general population, have a food allergy. Recent studies show that 6.9 million Americans (2.3 percent) report having a fish or shellfish allergy, and close to 3.3 million Americans (1.1 percent) are believed to be allergic to peanuts or tree nuts (e.g., pecans, walnuts, almonds). Scientists report that **food allergies are increasing – particularly peanut allergies – and teens are the highest-risk group for fatal food-allergic reactions.**

How can an allergic reaction be avoided?

Strict avoidance of the allergy-causing food is the only way to avoid a reaction. Reading ingredient labels for all foods is the key to maintaining control over the allergy.

What is cross-contact?

Cross-contact occurs when one food comes into contact with another food and their proteins mix. As a result, each food then contains small amounts of the other food, often invisible to us. Such contact may be either direct (e.g., placing cheese on a hamburger) or indirect via hands or utensils.

The protein is the component of the food that causes the food allergy. A tiny amount of an allergenic food is enough to cause an allergic reaction in some people. Therefore, precautions must be taken to avoid cross-contact with foods a guest is allergic to.

What do individuals with food allergies need from restaurant staff?

Individuals with food allergies need restaurants to provide them with accurate information about ingredients so they can make informed decisions about what to order from the menu. Incorrect or incomplete information puts these guests at risk for an allergic reaction.

“I am the mother of twin girls. I think restaurants should be able to provide a list of ingredients in their products. The restaurant would only have to hand me this list and let me decide what is best for my child.”

– Cyndee G., Gillespie, Ill.

Foods made from a variety of ingredients may contain allergens. For example, mayonnaise and meringue contain eggs, yogurt and many brands of products that carry “nondairy” labels contain milk, and marzipan is a paste made with almonds.

Common foods are often described in scientific or technical terms. For example, “albumin” is derived from egg, and “whey” is derived from milk. Individuals with egg and milk allergies must avoid these ingredients. See the “How to Read a Label” sheet in the Appendix for a list of other scientific and technical names for common allergy-causing foods.

“In an effort to make dining out with my food allergies an easier experience, I made business cards that list the ingredients I need to avoid. I’ve received positive feedback from the waitstaff.”

– Karen G., San Francisco, Calif.

“Whenever possible, I have restaurants fax me a copy of their menu ahead of time. This allows me to contact the kitchen staff during off-peak hours to ask questions about ingredients.”

– Anonymous

“If I am attending a catered event, I contact the caterer to discuss the menu and possible alternatives beforehand. If all else fails, I attend the event but eat before I go, or I take something with me that is safe for me to eat.”

– Carol M., Soquel, Calif.

Are cooking oils safe for guests who have a food allergy?

Studies have shown that *highly refined* peanut oil and soy oil have been safely ingested by individuals who are allergic to those foods. However, if the oil has previously been used to fry an allergen-containing food (e.g., egg rolls, shrimp), it may cause an allergic reaction in someone who is allergic to peanut or shellfish. This occurs because during cooking, protein is released into the oil and can then be transferred to other foods.

Cold-pressed, expelled, or extruded oils (sometimes referred to as “gourmet” oils) contain protein and are thus not safe for someone with an allergy to those foods.

Federal Allergen Labeling Law

Effective January 1, 2006, the **Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act** – passed by Congress in 2004 – requires that the major food allergens be listed in simple language on all packaged food (e.g., “milk” instead of “casein”). This includes major allergens in colorings, flavors, and additives.

Some physicians instruct patients who are allergic to peanuts and soy to avoid all oils made with these ingredients as an extra precaution. It is important that restaurants know what oil or oil blends they use in their operations and to provide this information to individuals upon request. If the oil or oil blend is changed, be sure the information you provide to the guest is updated.

What is the difference between an allergic reaction and food poisoning?

Consuming certain foods that have been mishandled can cause adverse reactions that mimic food-allergic reactions. Examples of mishandled foods include those that are thawed and then refrozen or kept at refrigerator temperature for a long time before cooking.

Typical symptoms of food poisoning include vomiting or diarrhea. These symptoms usually manifest themselves several hours after an individual consumes the food but also can occur days later. Individuals who contract food poisoning after eating fish or shellfish may mistakenly consider themselves allergic.

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Quiz

1. Food-allergic reactions occur within what time period after ingestion?
 - (a) within seconds
 - (b) from two minutes to 12 hours
 - (c) from within minutes to two hours
 - (d) within two days

2. Food-allergic reactions are responsible for how many emergency room visits per year?
 - (a) 30,000
 - (b) 3,000
 - (c) 12,000
 - (d) 300

3. What body systems can be affected by a food-allergic reaction?
 - (a) gastrointestinal tract
 - (b) respiratory system
 - (c) cardiovascular system
 - (d) skin
 - (e) all of the above

4. Eight foods – peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, milk, eggs, soy, and wheat – are responsible for what percentage of food-allergic reactions?
 - (a) 50 percent
 - (b) 75 percent
 - (c) 100 percent
 - (d) 90 percent

5. What component of a food is responsible for an allergic reaction?
 - (a) fat
 - (b) protein
 - (c) carbohydrate
 - (d) trans fatty acids

6. What medication is used to control a severe allergic reaction?
 - (a) antihistamine
 - (b) pseudoephedrine
 - (c) Sudafed™
 - (d) epinephrine

7. People with food allergies can safely consume the foods that cause allergies *if*
- (a) they only eat a small amount
 - (b) they take an antihistamine first
 - (c) never – they cannot safely consume these foods
 - (d) they eat the food with a large meal to dilute it
8. Fried foods can be dangerous for those with food allergies because
- (a) high fat content makes allergic reactions worse
 - (b) frying changes the chemical structure of foods
 - (c) cross-contact with other food proteins can occur

True or False?

9. Food-allergic reactions are a response of the immune system.
10. Close to 3.3 million Americans suffer from a peanut or tree nut allergy.

See page 16 for the Answer Key.

Answer Key for Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Quiz

1. C – from within minutes to two hours
2. A – 30,000
3. E – all of the above
4. D – 90 percent
5. B – protein
6. D – epinephrine
7. C – never
8. C – cross-contact with other foods can occur
9. True
10. True

RISK MANAGEMENT

Points to Remember

- ◆ Understanding the basics of food allergies is key to reducing liability.
- ◆ Restaurants should be able to supply, upon request, a list of ingredients for a menu item.
- ◆ During hours of operation, a restaurant should have at least one person on duty, ideally the manager, who can handle questions and special requests from guests with food allergies. Other staff members should know who that individual is and should direct questions about food allergies to that person.
- ◆ When a guest informs restaurant staff that he or she has a food allergy, staff should activate the restaurant's plan for handling the special order. That may mean providing the individual with a list of ingredients used or, in some cases, informing the guest that you cannot provide a safe meal because the foods are not prepared on-site and no ingredient information is available.
- ◆ If a guest is having an allergic reaction, call 911 and get medical help immediately!

Get Organized in Advance

- ◆ Post emergency number 911 at all telephones as a reminder in the event emergency services are needed. Also post the street address and telephone number of your restaurant by the phone.
- ◆ Schedule times throughout the day to ensure that kitchen and prep areas are properly cleaned and organized.
- ◆ Review the day-to-day operations of your restaurant, and pinpoint ways to reduce the risk of a mistake when preparing a special meal. For example, how can you improve communication between the servers who take the order and the kitchen staff who prepare the food?

Reducing Liability

Allergens are a liability risk. Understanding the basics of food allergies and how a reaction can be avoided is key to reducing liability.

N.H. family claims secret pesto sauce killed mom

Provide complete information about the ingredients in the menu selections. Upon request, staff should reveal ingredients that contain allergens, even if the ingredients are considered part of a “secret recipe.” Failing to disclose this information would expose the restaurant to potential liability if a guest who has a food allergy eats the food and has a reaction. In fact, lawsuits have been filed against restaurants when guests were given misinformation or incomplete information about ingredients used in a dish.

Studies of 63 fatal food-allergic reactions showed that nearly half of the reactions were caused by food from restaurants and other food service facilities.

Ensure that correct food handling procedures are followed. Restaurants have been held responsible for allergic reactions resulting from cross-contact between foods after a server was notified of a food allergy. In one example, a family explained that their child had an allergy to shellfish. The restaurant served the child French fries that had been prepared in the same oil used to fry shellfish. The child had an allergic reaction, and the family sued the restaurant.

Food allergy cited in suit over death

BY NATALIE P. MCNEAL

In addition to compensatory damages (which typically cover the cost of medical expenses plus compensation for pain and suffering), a restaurant could be held liable for punitive damages if a court finds that a restaurant’s actions showed reckless disregard for the customer’s safety. Punitive damages, when awarded, often exceed the amount of compensatory damages.

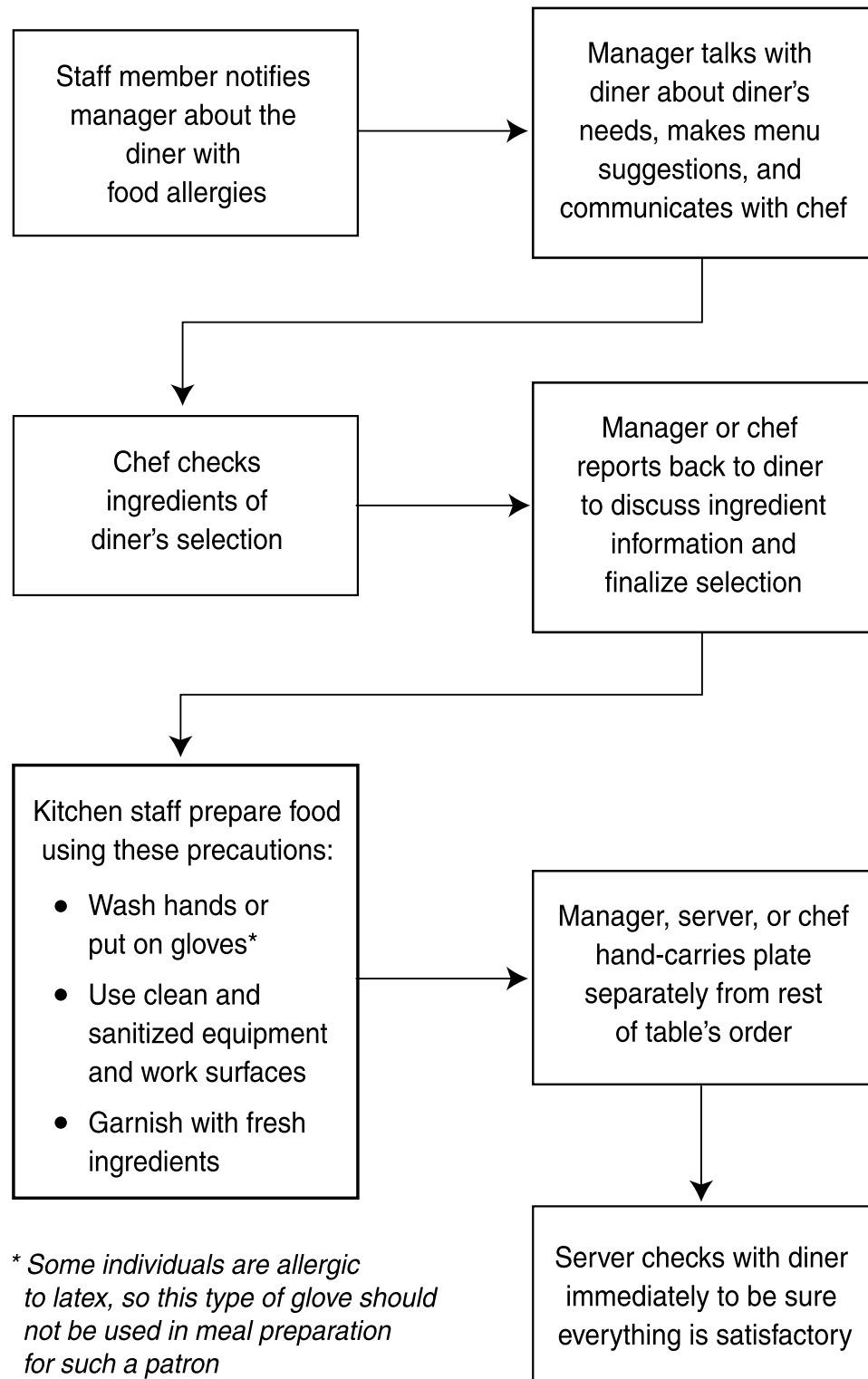
Suggested Procedures for Food Allergy Orders

In order to provide top-notch service to customers and avoid potential liability, it is important to designate staff members to handle questions and requests from guests who have food allergies. The staff should know who these individuals are and direct questions to them. Doing so will minimize risks for both the restaurant and the guest, creating a win-win situation.

When a guest identifies himself or herself as having a food allergy, the host, hostess, or server should notify the manager on duty. The manager should answer any questions the guest may have about the menu items and ensure that the proper procedures are followed for this special meal. The manager or chef should be responsible for discussing ingredient information with the guest and for letting the guest know if ingredient information is not available. Information about label reading can be found in the “How to Read a Label” sheet in the Appendix.

Although staff can supply information on ingredients and preparation methods, the guest has the final say in what his or her menu selection will be.

Summary of How a Food Allergy Order May Travel Through the Restaurant



If a Reaction Occurs

How the staff reacts in the event of an allergic emergency is equally important. If a customer notifies the staff that he or she is having an allergic reaction, **the staff should immediately call 911 and summon medical help. Staff should not delay medical treatment by denying that the reaction is occurring or waiting to see if it “passes.”**

Peanut and Tree Nut Allergic Reactions in Restaurants and Food Service Establishments

A study of allergic reactions to peanut and tree nut in restaurants and food service establishments showed that half the reactions occurred because these allergens were “hidden” in sauces, dressings, or egg rolls. Desserts accounted for the highest percentage of reactions (43 percent), followed by entrées (35 percent), appetizers (13 percent), and other foods (9 percent).

In most of the cases, eating the food caused the allergic reaction. Only five cases did not involve consumption of the food; two of the allergic reactions were caused by nut shells on the floor, two involved customer contact with residual food on a table, and in one case, the customer experienced an allergic reaction after coming within two feet of the food being cooked (cooking releases airborne proteins, which can cause a reaction). Reactions occurred in a variety of sit-down and quick-service restaurants. However, there were a higher number of incidents reported in Asian restaurants, ice cream shops, and bakeries or donut shops.

In most cases, customers had not mentioned their food allergy to the establishment’s employees. Instead, they relied on the menu for ingredient information. To help prevent food allergy incidents, food service operators may want to add a note at the bottom of the menu or post a sign prompting guests with food allergies to consult the manager for ingredient information.

THE MANAGER

Points to Remember

- ◆ The manager should be the point person for food allergy questions.
- ◆ The manager should have standard operating procedures in writing that describe best practices for preparing and serving foods to guests with food allergies. These procedures should clearly describe how to guide guests in making menu selections and define correct methods for meal preparation and serving.
- ◆ The manager should have instructions in writing for handling an allergic reaction.
- ◆ Food allergy training for all new employees must be provided before they begin serving guests, and periodic updates should be provided for existing staff.

Written Procedures and Staff Training

The manager should take responsibility for seeing that written procedures are in place for handling guests with food allergies and for educating front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house staff about food allergies and correct procedures. Ideally, the manager should be the point person for all food allergy questions from guests and staff.

The procedures should clearly define how to handle communications from customers about food allergies and how to guide them in making menu selections.

Simply prepared dishes minimize risks. For example, recommend a selection of broiled chicken instead of chicken in a sauce or chicken covered with pastry. Another example: baked potato instead of French fries.

In addition, written instructions for handling an allergic reaction must be developed. Having these plans in place before they are needed will ensure that staff appropriately handle any allergy emergency.

Managers also should conduct food allergy training periodically to be sure that both new hires and existing employees are properly prepared. Food allergy training can include a thorough review of the restaurant's food allergy management plan and discussion of the case reviews following the Front of the House and Back of the House sections.

Communication With Guests

Advise against high-risk menu choices

Fried foods are high-risk foods because cooking oil often is used for many foods. Unless there is a designated fryer, steer guests with food allergies away from fried foods.

Desserts are another food to watch. Desserts may incorporate allergy-causing ingredients – nuts, for example – in unexpected ways and can pose a risk to a guest with food allergies. Individuals who have food allergies generally are safest avoiding desserts and selecting fresh fruit instead.

Sauces can be used in entrées or desserts. Unless you are absolutely sure about the ingredients used, recommend that guests who have food allergies skip the sauces.

Pastry-covered dishes prevent the individual from making a visual inspection of the food he or she is about to eat – an important precaution for anyone with a food allergy.

Combination foods, such as stews or pot pies, contain many ingredients, and some of these ingredients can be difficult to see. To be on the safe side, recommend that guests who have food allergies avoid these types of dishes.

Buffet tables and points of service such as deli stations and grill stations in cafeteria-style food service operations are considered high-risk for people with food allergies because of the possibility of cross-contact. Serving utensils may be used for several dishes, or small bits of food from one dish may wind up in other dishes. For example, shredded cheese placed next to a milk-free food may wind up in the milk-free food. Also, buffet labels may get mixed up.

If a guest with food allergies wants a particular selection on the buffet that is not offered on the menu, consider asking the kitchen staff to specially prepare the dish for the guest.

Make menu reading food allergy friendly

Review the current menu. Provide as much information as possible about ingredients directly on the menu. The following are some examples:

Instead of	Describe as
Apple Cake	Apple-Walnut Cake
Blue Cheese Dressing	Blue Cheese and Walnut Dressing
Monterey Pasta Salad	Monterey Pasta Salad With Almonds
Chicken Stir-Fry	Chicken Cashew Stir-Fry
Asian Noodles	Asian Noodles With Peanuts
Pasta With Pesto	Pasta With Pesto (Contains Pine Nuts)

If a food does not have a label or if you are unsure about the ingredients, do not guess. Suggest another menu selection for which you have ingredient information.

It's OK to say "I don't know"

If you are not 100 percent sure about the ingredients in a menu item, say so. The guest will appreciate your honesty. Guide them to other choices on the menu. Managers should work closely with the chef, consulting about ingredients or asking him or her to speak to the guest about safe menu selections.

What others have done

To encourage guests who have food allergies to work with restaurant staff, some restaurants include a printed note at the bottom of their menus or on their website. Examples of such notes include the following:

- ◆ "Food-allergic guests, please see manager."
- ◆ "For those who have food allergies, please inform your server. We will be happy to discuss any necessary changes."
- ◆ "Please alert your server to any food allergies before ordering."
- ◆ "Before placing your order, please alert the manager to your food allergy or special dietary need."

Some restaurants designate a few menu items as "safe" dishes for individuals who have food allergies and recommend those dishes. For example, there may be one or two items on the menu, including desserts, that are peanut- or nut-free.

Some restaurants use “secret shoppers” or “secret diners” to provide honest feedback about service. Consider having a secret shopper place an allergy-free order so you can evaluate your food allergy plan in action.

If your restaurant or food service company uses third-party food safety auditors, consider enlisting them to verify that your operation’s food allergy plan is understood, active, and effectively executed.

See the Appendix for reproducible consumer information materials you can customize to include your logo and print using your company design and colors. Just be sure to include FAAN’s name on the materials, and allow FAAN to review any editorial changes you make before using the materials.

Accurate Information Is the Key

Keep printed materials up to date. Be sure that the information at the restaurant is accurate and current. If you post information on your website, be sure that the information is the same as what is on the printed material at the restaurant. To minimize risks of misinformation, it

may be safer to have only one place, such as the corporate website, for ingredient information.

Post ingredient information on your website. Many people look to a company’s website for information before visiting the establishment. Consider posting information about ingredients and your procedures for handling food allergies. **Make sure the website is kept current.**

Be sure the printed information at each establishment is the same as the information you have on the website to prevent confusion and avoid risks.

“I want to let you know about our experience at a local restaurant that is part of a national chain. When we visited there with our son – who is allergic to peanuts – we told the waitress about his needs. She told us that they use peanut oil to cook with and went to get the manager.

“The manager brought out a book and turned to the ‘I am allergic to peanuts, I can eat...’ page and showed us which foods are safe. He also went to the kitchen when our order was prepared to make sure it was done peanut-free. I was amazed, as I had never received that level of service or concern.”

– Betsy H., Eden Prairie, Minn.

“My 3-year-old son, Alexander, has a life-threatening food allergy to all dairy products. As you might imagine, it is difficult – to say the least – to eat out in restaurants with him.

“The staff of our favorite restaurant franchise has proved that they can accommodate us. We have dined at several of their locations away from home. At every meal, the chef in charge came out and spoke to us about what he or she could prepare that would be safe for Alexander. It is very nice to know that their staff has been very willing and able to provide meals for Alexander. We look forward to supporting their restaurant when it opens near our home.”

– Jeffrey M., Glastonbury, Conn.

Several restaurants have added a link to the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network’s website with the following message to their customers: “For information about food allergies, please contact the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network at www.foodallergy.org or (800) 929-4040.”

Handling Inquiries via Telephone

Some diners who have food allergies may call ahead to find out about menu options. Designate one staff member to whom such calls should be referred.

Handling a Complaint

If a guest notifies you of a food-allergy-related incident, listen carefully and gather all the facts from the customer and any staff members who were involved. Effectively resolving customer complaints is an integral part of providing top-notch service, so staff should be trained to not react defensively or dismiss the guest’s concerns.

Did You Know?
Some bar drinks contain milk, egg, or nut extracts. Eggs are sometimes used to create the foam for the milk topping on specialty coffee drinks.

View any reported allergic reaction as an opportunity to re-evaluate your food allergy management plan and pinpoint areas that need improvement.

If a Reaction Occurs

How the staff reacts in the event of an allergic emergency is important. If a guest notifies the staff that he or she is having an allergic reaction, **staff should immediately call 911 and summon medical help. Staff should not delay medical treatment by denying that the reaction is occurring or waiting to see if it “passes.”**

One woman who was allergic to eggs had a severe reaction to egg whites that were added to a bar drink, even though she had notified the waiter of her allergy. When she reported the incident to the manager, he told her that since it was a small amount she had ingested, she probably didn't get very sick.

This is clearly inappropriate. Take all reports of a food allergy reaction very seriously, and work toward resolving the situation.

FRONT OF THE HOUSE

Points to Remember

- ◆ Food allergies are allergic disorders. Guests aren't simply stating their food preferences. Be understanding, listen carefully, and answer questions thoughtfully.
- ◆ Guests who have food allergies depend on front-of-the-house staff to notify other key staff members, such as the manager and chef, of their dietary restrictions.
- ◆ Improper garnishing or handling of a dish can contaminate an otherwise safe meal.
- ◆ If a mistake occurs with the special order, the only acceptable way to correct the situation is to have the kitchen staff discard the incorrect order and remake it.

Hosts and Hostesses

If a guest notifies the host or hostess about a food allergy, the host or hostess should relay that information immediately to the designated staff member – ideally, the manager. The designated person should answer the guest’s questions and assist with menu selection.

Before seating a guest who has a food allergy, the host or hostess should make sure the seating area has been thoroughly cleaned to ensure that the diner will not come into contact with any leftover food from the previous party. In addition, the table should not be close to the kitchen entrance; splattering food or steam may spread allergens to the guest’s table.

Servers

Servers must keep in mind that food allergies are allergic disorders, not food preferences. For some people, food allergies can be quite serious. Servers should be understanding, listen carefully, and answer questions thoughtfully. They should show concern but not be intrusive. Most diners who have food allergies prefer not to draw unnecessary attention to their allergy.

The designated staff member – ideally, the manager – should inform the kitchen staff of the special needs of the diner who has a food allergy and make a written notation on the guest ticket. The ticket should then be flagged with something very visible, such as a bold red line or “special instructions” written at the top of the ticket. This will alert the kitchen staff to be aware of any cross-contact issues. Cross-contact occurs when one food comes into contact with another food and their proteins mix. As a result, each food then contains small amounts of the other food, often invisible to us. Such contact may be either direct (e.g., placing cheese on a hamburger) or indirect via hands or utensils. It is not sufficient simply to modify the order – for example, writing “no cheese” or “no sour cream” on the ticket for a guest who has a milk allergy. Kitchen staff must be aware that the diner has a food allergy.

Serving the Order

Special orders should not be removed from the service window by anyone but the designated person – manager, chef, or server. This precaution will prevent such problems as delivering the wrong food to the guest, adding inappropriate garnishes, or exposing the specially prepared meal to cross-contact with a food allergen.

Once the appropriate garnishes are added, the food should be hand-carried directly to the guest. The server should ensure that nothing is inadvertently spilled on or brushed against the special meal.

Diners may question or request specific ingredients for a number of reasons. These reasons include personal preference, weight reduction, and food allergies. Keep in mind that food allergies, unlike the other examples, are potentially deadly.

Avoiding Cross-Contact While Serving the Meal

There are a number of ways allergens may enter a meal through cross-contact during the serving process. The following are the most common examples.

Unclean hands or gloves. Something as simple as picking up a muffin containing nuts, setting it down, and then picking up a nut-free muffin may be enough to cause cross-contact. Wash hands thoroughly and put on a fresh pair of gloves before preparing an allergen-free meal.

Splashed or spilled food. It is possible for cross-contact to occur if a guest's food, drinks, or utensils are carried on a tray with other items. Ingredients from other foods can splash or spill onto something that is otherwise allergen-free. For example, milk or cream can spill, or butter can brush against something that is otherwise milk-free. Use a small plate or saucer when carrying cream or butter to catch any spills. Ideally, the allergen-free meal should be carried by itself directly from the kitchen.

Trays. As an extra precaution, trays used to carry allergen-free meals should first be cleaned thoroughly with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures. Just wiping a tray down is not enough.

Garnishes. To minimize the chance for mistakes, only the chef, manager, or other designated staff member should garnish the plate. Ingredients on the line can easily spill into containers of other ingredients. For example, it's easy for shredded cheese, croutons, or nuts to become mixed with prepped vegetables, garnishes, herbs, and other ingredients. To avoid cross-contact, always use the backup supply of fresh ingredients.

Pockets. Instruct servers not to carry cheese graters, pepper mills, or other utensils in their apron pockets.

Correcting a Mistake in Meal Preparation

Mistakes are bound to occur. If a mistake is made on an order for a diner who has food allergies, the only acceptable correction is to discard the order and remake it. Removing the offending ingredient – for example, scraping nuts off the top of a sundae or taking the cheese off a burger – is no solution. A trace amount of protein remaining on the food could be enough to cause an allergic reaction.

If necessary, inform the diner that it will take a few extra minutes to ensure that his or her meal is prepared properly. Afterward, review what went wrong and determine what steps to take to avoid similar mistakes in the future. Be sure to retrain staff to prevent this type of mistake from happening again.

If a Reaction Occurs

How the staff reacts in the event of an allergic emergency is important. If a guest notifies the staff that he or she is having an allergic reaction, **staff should immediately call 911 and summon medical help. Staff should not delay medical treatment by denying that the reaction is occurring or waiting to see if it “passes.”**

Front of the House Quiz

1. If, before being seated, a guest says that he or she has a food allergy, what steps should be taken to ensure that the guest will not come into contact with any leftover food from a previous party?
 - (a) Seat the guest at a table that is not often used.
 - (b) Be sure to use a clean placemat and/or other table settings.
 - (c) Thoroughly clean the table and chairs.
 - (d) Seat the guest at a table near the kitchen.
2. When a guest says he or she has a food allergy, which staff member should you notify immediately?
 - (a) manager
 - (b) cook
 - (c) chef
 - (d) food runner
3. Which of the following are possible sources of cross-contact?
 - (a) not washing your hands or not using a fresh pair of gloves before serving the special order
 - (b) carrying the special order on a tray with other food items
 - (c) garnishing other orders near the special-order item
 - (d) using the same napkin or towel (for hot-plate service) for both meals that contain allergens and allergen-free meals
 - (e) all of the above
4. When a guest who has a food allergy asks about ingredients and preparation methods, the appropriate answer is:
 - (a) "I'm almost positive that the item doesn't contain the allergen."
 - (b) "I'm sure we can leave it out of the dish if you'd like – I'll just make a note on the ticket."
 - (c) "I don't think it's in there."
 - (d) "I don't know. Let me get the manager or chef to be sure."
5. If a mistake occurs – for example, if the kitchen staff adds cheese to an order for a guest who has a milk allergy, or if the server forgets to use a separate serving tray and food from another order comes into contact with the special order – what is the acceptable method for correcting the situation?
 - (a) Remove the top layer of food that the allergen came in contact with, and add a little more of an acceptable food.
 - (b) If it's just a little and it's something that can be removed completely, remove the allergen and carefully inspect the dish to be sure you've removed it all.
 - (c) Have the kitchen staff discard the order and remake the order from scratch.

True or False?

6. When placing an order, the server should note on the ticket the items that must be left off the plate and let the kitchen staff take it from there.
7. Improper garnishing or handling of a dish can contaminate an otherwise safe meal.
8. Once a food has been properly prepared, there is no longer any risk for the guest who has a food allergy.
9. If a guest tells you that he or she is experiencing an allergic reaction, the first thing you should do is find out how it could have happened.

See page 34 for the Answer Key.

Answer Key for Front of the House Quiz

1. C – thoroughly clean the table and chairs
2. A – manager
3. E – all of the above
4. D – “I don’t know. Let me get the manager or chef to be sure.”
5. C – have the kitchen staff discard the order and remake the order from scratch
6. False – It is important to flag the ticket with a notice of the allergy so that the kitchen staff can properly prepare the dish.
7. True.
8. False – Cross-contact can occur on the serving tray. Take extra precautions when serving the dish to a diner with food allergies.
9. False – If a guest tells you that he or she is experiencing an allergic reaction, the first thing you should do is get medical help immediately by dialing 911. Activate your restaurant’s food allergy emergency plan.

Case Reviews

Discussing the following case reviews can help front-of-the-house staff pinpoint mistakes and determine how to prevent similar mistakes in the future. These case reviews describe real-life experiences.

Case Review 1

A guest in a Chinese restaurant asked his server whether the restaurant's egg rolls contained peanuts. The waitress assured him that peanut oil had not been used to fry the egg roll. The customer took a few bites of the egg roll and quickly developed an allergic reaction. He died 90 minutes later.

How did this happen?

Since the waitress didn't ask her manager or chef about the ingredients, she didn't realize that the restaurant had changed its egg roll recipe to enhance the taste by adding peanut butter.

Peanut butter is also sometimes used to glue down the ends of egg rolls.

How could this have been prevented?

Be sure food allergy questions are directed to one or two designated staff members only. The designated staff members should verify all ingredients of a meal with the chef so that they can accurately answer guests' questions.

Case Review 2

After being seated in a restaurant, but before placing her order, a girl with a milk allergy developed hives on her wrist and on the underside of her left arm. (Hives are a common symptom of a food-allergic reaction.)

How did this happen?

The table had not been thoroughly cleaned, and there was milk residue left on the surface from a previous guest. The girl experienced a contact reaction after resting her arms on the table.

How could this have been prevented?

Be sure table surfaces are cleaned with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures. If tabletops cannot be cleaned thoroughly, consider using disposable paper tablecloths.

Case Review 3

A man with a known allergy to shrimp ordered chicken scampi, and his wife ordered shrimp scampi. Soon after he took his first bite, he complained that his chest was tight and that he was having difficulty breathing. He died a few hours later from an allergic reaction to shrimp.

How did this happen?

The kitchen staff prepared two orders of shrimp scampi and then simply removed the shrimp from one of the plates and replaced it with chicken. Enough shrimp protein was left on the man's plate to cause a fatal reaction.

How could this have been prevented?

Be sure staff understand that trace amounts of an allergen may cause a life-threatening reaction for some individuals. When any mistake is made on an order for a guest with food allergies, discard it and make it again from scratch.

BACK OF THE HOUSE

Points to Remember

- ◆ Food allergies are allergic disorders. Customers aren't just stating their food preferences. Your cooperation is needed to help them avoid an allergic reaction.
- ◆ Guests who have food allergies depend on back-of-the-house staff to provide complete and accurate information about the ingredients used in menu items.
- ◆ Ingredients found in unexpected places can place guests at risk for an allergic reaction.
- ◆ Avoiding cross-contact between a safe food and an allergen-containing food is essential to preparing safe meals for guests with food allergies.
- ◆ If a mistake occurs with a special order, the only acceptable way to correct the situation is to discard the incorrect order and remake it.

Back-of-the-House Staff

Back-of-the-house staff are among the most important members of the food allergy team. Guests with food allergies depend on the chef for answers about a meal's ingredients and the cooking methods used, and they choose their menu items based on this information. In addition, guests depend on back-of-the-house staff to prepare the meal safely.

Checking Ingredients

The only way for a guest with food allergies to avoid an allergic reaction is to avoid the allergy-causing foods. Such guests need to know what ingredients are present in selected menu items. Chefs must read ingredient and allergen information for the products they use every time they prepare a food allergy

If you are unsure about the ingredients in a menu item, do not guess. Check the ingredient labels, or explain that you cannot verify that the menu item is safe.

order, because manufacturers may change ingredients without notice. It is crucial to inform the diner if any ingredients are used in unexpected ways, such as adding crushed nuts to a pie crust, using peanut butter to glue down the ends of egg rolls, or using peanut butter to thicken sauces.

Be sure to inform diners of ingredients included in marinades, as well as ingredients that are added for flavor, such as butter put on grilled foods or added to rice while cooking.

Identifying Allergens Found in Unexpected Places

It is essential to carefully read the food labels of all ingredients in a meal. As the following list shows, allergens can be found in some common food items.

Worcestershire sauce: This sauce contains anchovies and/or sardines; both are fish.

Barbecue sauce: At least one brand of barbecue sauce contains pecans, which are listed on the label.

Imitation butter flavor: This ingredient often contains milk protein, which may be listed on the ingredient statement as either artificial or natural butter flavor.

Sweet-and-sour sauce: Some brands of sweet-and-sour sauce contain wheat and soy.

Egg substitutes: Most brands of commercial egg substitutes contain egg white.

Canned tuna: Some brands contain casein (a milk protein) or soy protein as a natural flavoring.

If an ingredient statement is unavailable, inform the manager or guest. If possible, substitute an ingredient that you know is safe, or suggest another menu selection.

Avoiding Cross-Contact in the Kitchen

When preparing food for a guest who has a food allergy, chefs and line cooks must take extra precautions to avoid cross-contact due to spilled or splattered food from other dishes. Cross-contact occurs when one food comes into contact with another food and their proteins mix. As a result, each food then contains small amounts of the other food, often invisible to us. Such contact may be either direct (e.g., placing cheese on a hamburger) or indirect via hands or utensils.

The following are the most common culprits in cross-contact:

Unclean hands or gloves. Picking up a muffin containing nuts, setting it down, and then picking up a nut-free muffin may result in cross-contact. Wash hands thoroughly and put on a fresh pair of gloves before preparing an allergen-free meal.

Shared equipment, utensils, grills, fryers, cooking areas, and counters. If a spatula and cookie sheet are used to prepare peanut-containing cookies and then are wiped clean and reused to prepare peanut-free cookies, traces of peanut protein are likely to remain on both the utensil and pan. A guest with a peanut allergy may have an allergic reaction to these “peanut-free” cookies.

Use clean utensils for each ingredient or food, or set aside a designated set of utensils (e.g., knife, spatula, spoon) for handling meals for guests with food allergies. These special utensils can be color-coded for quick identification and proper use.

Similarly, pots, pans, and woks used to prepare a dish that contains an allergen (such as peanuts or shellfish) and then merely wiped clean before cooking another meal may still contain enough protein to cause an allergic reaction to the next meal that is prepared in it. Therefore, all pans should be thoroughly washed with soap and water and then sanitized.

Restaurateurs need to identify situations that may lead to cross-contact and either implement procedures to prevent these situations or inform customers with food allergies about the risk.

A pot of water that is used to boil allergen-containing foods may contain enough protein to contaminate other foods boiled in the same water. For example, water used to boil cheese-filled pasta may transfer enough milk protein to milk-free pasta to cause an allergic reaction in someone who has a milk allergy.

A griddle that is used to cook a variety of foods (such as fish, meat, or eggs) or that is coated with butter may have enough protein on it to result in cross-contact with the other foods cooked on it.

All equipment or utensils should be cleaned with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures and then sanitized before being used to prepare a dish for a diner who has a food allergy. Be sure to keep all utensils that are used to prepare special orders (spatulas, knives, meat thermometers, tongs, spoons, blenders, sizzle platters, pans) separate from utensils being used for other orders. If possible, have designated preparation areas for allergy-causing foods, such as shellfish.

Refilled serving containers. If a container that was originally filled with cashews is refilled with peanuts without being washed first, the peanuts could have enough cashew protein on them to cause an allergic reaction in someone with a cashew allergy. Wash and sanitize all containers carefully before refilling them with new foods.

Garnishes. Ingredients on the line may spill into open containers of garnishing ingredients. For example, shredded cheese, croutons, or nuts could mix with prepped vegetables, herbs, or other garnishes.

As a precaution, do not add garnishes to orders prepared for guests who have food allergies unless procedures are established and followed to prevent cross-contact. To avoid a mistake, the chef, manager, or other designated staff member should be the one to apply garnishes, using ingredients from the backup supply. Consider keeping garnishes that contain common allergy-causing foods, such as milk, peanuts, and nuts, in covered containers. If a mistake is made and the allergen accidentally gets into an allergen-free dish being prepared, discard the food and prepare a new dish.

Splatter or steam from cooking foods. The splatter or steam from one food may spread its proteins to another. When preparing a meal for a diner who has a food allergy, don't cook the allergen-free food near foods containing the allergen. Do not pass other foods, plates, pans, or utensils over the pan containing the special order as it cooks. Just a drop of the allergy-causing food is enough to put the guest at risk for an allergic reaction. Once the dish is made, clearly identify it to be sure the correct plate is served. Keep it away from all other food.

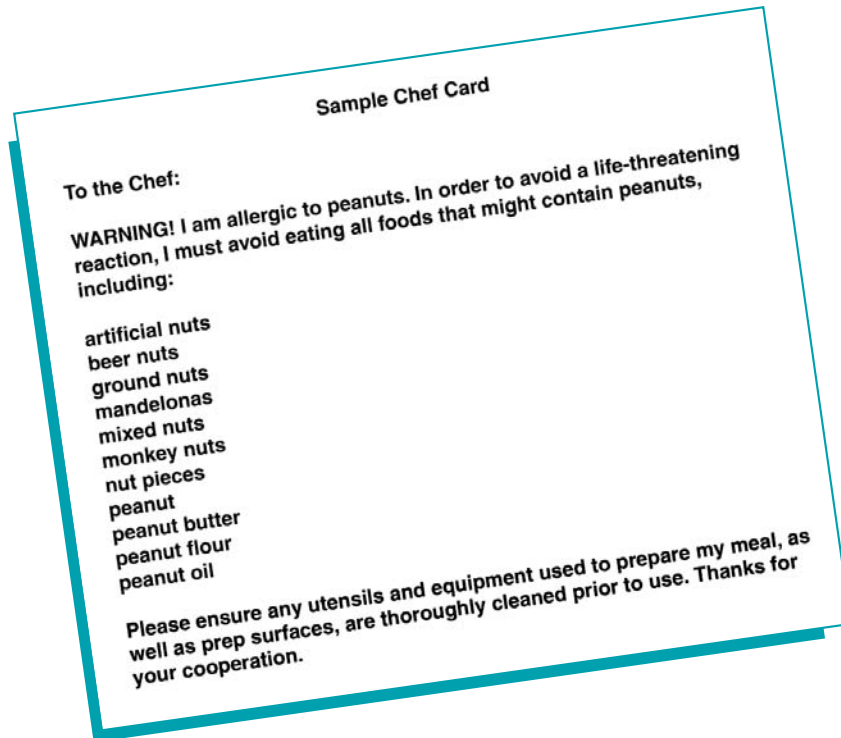
Deep fryers. Oil in deep fryers that has been used to cook many foods will contain protein from the previously fried foods. If possible, designate a fryer for one type of food to prevent cross-contact.

A child with a sesame seed allergy had an allergic reaction after eating a grilled cheese sandwich at a restaurant. The chef had used a sesame seed bun and cut off the top and bottom to make the slices of bread for the sandwich.

Correcting Mistakes

If a mistake is made on an order, discard the order and make a new one. Taking shortcuts, such as removing the nuts mistakenly added to a nut-free sundae, may land someone in the hospital.

“Chef cards” are becoming increasingly popular with individuals who have food allergies. Although the information on the cards may vary, the intent is to alert restaurant staff to the ingredients that need to be avoided. Here is a sample chef card for a guest with a tree nut allergy:



Back of the House Quiz

1. If a mistake occurs – for example, you accidentally sprinkle just a few nuts onto a sundae for a guest allergic to tree nuts, or just a couple of croutons onto a salad for a guest with a wheat allergy – how should you correct the situation?
 - (a) Remove the top layer of food that the allergen came into contact with, and add a little more of an acceptable food.
 - (b) If it's just a little and it's something that can be removed completely, remove the allergen and carefully inspect the dish to be sure you've removed it all.
 - (c) Discard the dish, and remake the order from scratch.
2. Which of the following could cause cross-contact?
 - (a) using the same utensils for other foods as well as for the special order
 - (b) preparing the special order on a countertop that has not been thoroughly cleaned beforehand
 - (c) garnishing other orders near the special-order item
 - (d) not washing your hands or not using a fresh pair of gloves before handling the special order
 - (e) all of the above
3. If an ingredient statement is unavailable for an ingredient in a dish, what should you do?
 - (a) Don't serve that food, and suggest another menu selection.
 - (b) Look at the food closely, and if it looks safe, serve it.
 - (c) Ask the diner whether or not the ingredient is safe.
4. Before preparing a meal for a guest who has a food allergy, what method should be used to clean all equipment and utensils?
 - (a) Wipe the equipment's surfaces with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures.
 - (b) Thoroughly clean equipment and utensils with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures, and then sanitize them.
 - (c) Mist water onto equipment and utensils, and rub vigorously with a clean, dry towel.
5. When cooking or preparing a meal for a diner who has a food allergy, it is important
 - (a) not to cook an allergen-containing food next to it
 - (b) not to pass other foods, plates, pans, or utensils over the pan containing the special order as it cooks
 - (c) to clearly identify the dish once it is made
 - (d) all of the above

True or False?

6. When preparing a meal for a diner who has a food allergy, cooking an allergen-containing food next to it may result in cross-contact with the special order.
7. Oil in deep fryers that are used to cook many foods contains protein from foods previously fried in the oil.
8. Most commercial brands of egg substitutes are safe to use when preparing a meal for a diner who has an egg allergy.
9. Thoroughly washing all utensils and equipment with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures and then sanitizing them before use will help eliminate the risk of cross-contact.
10. Once a dish is made, it should be clearly identified to prevent the wrong plate from being served to the customer.

See page 44 for the Answer Key.

Answer Key for Back of the House Quiz

1. C – discard the dish and remake the order from scratch
2. E – all of the above
3. A – substitute an ingredient you know is safe or suggest another menu selection
4. B – thoroughly clean equipment and utensils with hot, soapy water or other appropriate cleaning compounds and procedures, and then sanitize them
5. D – all of the above
6. True
7. True
8. False – Most commercial brands of egg substitutes contain egg white.
9. True
10. True

Case Reviews

Discussing the following case reviews can help back-of-the-house staff pinpoint mistakes and determine how to prevent similar mistakes in the future. These case reviews describe real-life experiences.

Case Review 1

A woman with a peanut allergy ordered a cannoli. The menu indicated that the cannoli contained chopped pistachio nuts. The woman ate the cannoli and had a reaction that required a trip to the emergency room.

How did this happen?

Although the restaurant didn't realize it, the bakery that supplied the cannoli to the restaurant used peanut pieces that were dyed green instead of pistachio nuts.

How could this have been prevented?

Be sure that your suppliers provide complete ingredient information for all foods and that the staff members designated to handle guests with food allergies read ingredient information for all foods prepared for those guests.

Case Review 2

A couple and their 2-year-old son were dining in a restaurant. The couple told the server about their son's allergies to peanuts and milk and asked about ingredients. They ordered a plain hamburger. When the burger was served, the father lifted the bun to be sure it hadn't been buttered and didn't contain cheese. Satisfied that the burger was OK, the father began feeding his son the hamburger. He soon noticed traces of cheese on the bottom of the meat. The little boy suffered an allergic reaction.

How did this happen?

When someone in the kitchen noticed that cheese had been added to the burger, they peeled the cheese off the hamburger instead of making a new one.

How could this have been prevented?

Be sure staff understand that trace amounts of an allergen may cause a life-threatening reaction in some individuals. Emphasize that if a mistake is made when preparing a meal for a customer with a food allergy, the dish must be discarded, and the order must be remade from scratch.

PREPARING FOR AN ALLERGY EMERGENCY

Accidents can happen at any time!

Make sure your emergency plans include steps for handling an allergy emergency in your restaurant.

- ◆ Prepare a Checklist for Handling an Allergy Emergency that outlines steps staff should follow if a guest should experience an allergic reaction. Copy the checklist onto brightly colored paper, and post it in a highly visible area. At the top of the checklist, consider adding a statement such as the following:

If someone is having an allergic reaction, do not deny it, and do not argue with the customer or defend the restaurant. Take action – call 911 and get medical help immediately!
- ◆ Designate a key staff member, ideally the manager, to handle a situation involving an allergic reaction. Identify the designated individual on the checklist.
- ◆ Post the number for emergency services near every phone, along with the restaurant's address. Include a reminder to tell the operator that someone is having a severe allergic reaction.
- ◆ Just as you would with a fire drill, have staff members practice the allergy emergency procedures. Afterward, discuss ways the plan could be improved, and adjust it as necessary.

GLOSSARY OF ALLERGY TERMS

Allergen	Any substance that causes an allergic reaction.
Allergic disorder	A malfunction of the immune system that causes it to overreact to certain substances in the environment.
Allergic reaction	An immune system response to a substance – in the case of food allergies, the proteins from allergenic foods – that the body mistakenly interprets as harmful.
Anaphylaxis	A severe allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death.
Antihistamine	A medication – available via prescription and over the counter – that is used to block the effects of histamine, a chemical that is released during an allergic reaction.
Chef card	A card individuals with food allergies can use to communicate to restaurant staff which foods they must avoid. A template is available on the FAAN website (www.foodallergy.org , click on “Downloads”).
Cross-contact	Occurs when one food comes into contact with another food and their proteins mix. As a result, each food then contains small amounts of the other food, often invisible to us. Such contact may be either direct (e.g., placing cheese on a hamburger) or indirect via hands or utensils. Sometimes referred to as “cross-contamination.”
Epinephrine	Another name for adrenaline. It is the medicine of choice for controlling severe or anaphylactic reactions. It is available by prescription in a self-injectable form, called EpiPen® or Twinject®. People who are prescribed this medication should have it available <i>at all times</i> .
Food allergy	The immune system’s reaction to a certain food. The immune system mistakenly considers the food to be harmful and creates antibodies to that food. When the food is eaten again, the immune system releases histamine and other chemicals, causing the symptoms of an allergic reaction.

- Food poisoning** Illness that results from eating food contaminated with organisms or toxins. Symptoms typically occur within two to six hours and may include nausea and vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, fever and chills, weakness, and headache.
- Gluten intolerance** An intolerance caused by the body’s inability to break down gluten, which is found in wheat, rye, and barley. Symptoms can include severe abdominal pain and diarrhea and usually occur six or more hours after the food is eaten. As a result, it is often difficult to pinpoint the food that caused the reaction. Also called “celiac sprue” or “celiac disease.”
- Histamine** One of several chemicals released by the body during an allergic reaction. It is the cause of many of the symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Hives** Bumps that resemble mosquito bites. They are extremely itchy and can appear anywhere on the body. This is a common and visible symptom of food-allergic reactions. Also called “urticaria.”
- Lactose intolerance** A reaction to a food that does not involve the immune system. Lactose-intolerant people lack an enzyme that is needed to digest milk sugar. When they eat milk products, symptoms such as gas, bloating, and abdominal pain may occur. Lactose intolerance is more common in adults than in young children.

APPENDIX

The materials in the Appendix may be reproduced and customized using your company logo, design, and colors to use in educating staff and consumers. Please be sure to allow the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) to review any editorial changes you make. FAAN should be credited as the source of this information.

- ◆ **Food Allergy Basics for Consumers** – educates guests and shows your commitment to their well-being
- ◆ **How to Read a Label Sheet** – educates guests and staff alike about terms they may find in ingredient labels
- ◆ **Diner With Food Allergies?** – handy reference tool for staff to refresh their memories about the correct procedures to use with guests who have food allergies
- ◆ **Posters in English and Spanish** – remind staff to review ingredients and avoid cross-contact during food preparation

Food Allergy Basics for Consumers

1. What is a food allergy?

A food allergy is an immune system response to a food that the body mistakenly believes is harmful. Once a person's immune system decides that a particular food is harmful, it creates specific antibodies to fight it. The next time the individual eats that food, the immune system releases massive amounts of chemicals, including histamine, in order to protect the body. These chemicals trigger a cascade of allergic symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin, or cardiovascular system. Scientists estimate that about 12 million Americans suffer from food allergies.

2. What are the common symptoms of a food-allergic reaction?

Symptoms, which range from mild to severe, can include a tingling sensation in the mouth, swelling of the tongue and the throat, difficulty breathing, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, a drop in blood pressure, and/or loss of consciousness. In rare cases, death can occur. Severe or life-threatening reactions are called anaphylaxis. Symptoms typically appear within minutes to up to two hours after the person has eaten the food to which he or she is allergic.

3. What is the best treatment for a food allergy?

Strict avoidance of the allergy-causing food is the only way to prevent a reaction. Reading the ingredient labels of all foods is the key to maintaining control over the allergy. If a product doesn't have a label or if the label contains unfamiliar terms, staff must avoid serving that food to an individual with food allergies.

Dining Tips and Strategies

- ◆ Select a restaurant or food service establishment carefully. Do a little research about the type of food a restaurant offers before going there.
- ◆ Speak up! In addition to telling your server, always ask questions and inform the manager or chef of your allergy.
- ◆ Order simply prepared foods; avoid sauces and dishes with mystery ingredients.
- ◆ If a mistake is made with your order, keep the incorrectly prepared dish at your table to ensure that kitchen staff prepare a new meal rather than simply removing the food allergen.
- ◆ Thank the restaurant staff members for the attention they gave to your food allergy concerns, especially if they go out of their way to help you.
- ◆ Always carry your medicine!

HOW TO READ A LABEL for a MILK-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain milk or any of these ingredients:

artificial butter flavor
 butter, butter fat, butter oil
 buttermilk
 casein (*casein hydrolysate*)
 caseinates (*in all forms*)
 cheese
 cream
 cottage cheese
 curds
 custard
 ghee
 half & half
 lactalbumin, lactalbumin phosphate
 lactoferrin
 lactulose
 milk (*in all forms including condensed, derivative, dry, evaporated, goat's milk and milk from other animals, low-fat, malted, milkfat, non-fat, powder; protein, skimmed, solids, whole*)

nisin
 nougat
 pudding
 recaldent
 rennet casein
 sour cream, sour cream solids
 sour milk solids
 whey (*in all forms*)
 yogurt

May indicate the presence of milk protein:

caramel candies
 chocolate
 flavorings (*including natural and artificial*)
 high protein flour
 lactic acid starter culture
 lactose
 luncheon meat, hot dogs, sausages
 margarine
 non-dairy products



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HOW TO READ A LABEL for a SOY-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain soy or any of these ingredients:

edamame
 hydrolyzed soy protein
 miso
 natto
 shoyu sauce
 soy (*soy albumin, soy fiber, soy flour, soy grits, soy milk, soy nuts, soy sprouts*)
 soya

soybean (*curd, granules*)
 soy protein (*concentrate, isolate*)
 soy sauce
 Tamari
 Tempeh
 textured vegetable protein (TVP)
 tofu

May indicate the presence of soy protein:

Asian cuisine
 flavoring (*including natural and artificial*)
 vegetable broth

vegetable gum
 vegetable starch

- Studies show most individuals allergic to soy may safely eat soybean oil.
- Most individuals allergic to soy can safely eat soy lecithin.

Check with your doctor if you have questions about these ingredients.

HOW TO READ A LABEL for a PEANUT-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain peanuts or any of these ingredients:

artificial nuts
 beer nuts
 cold pressed, expelled, or extruded
 peanut oil
 goobers
 ground nuts
 mixed nuts
 monkey nuts
 nutmeat
 nut pieces
 peanut
 peanut butter
 peanut flour

May indicate the presence of peanut protein:

African, Asian (*especially Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese*), and Mexican dishes
 baked goods (*pastries, cookies, etc.*)
 candy (*including chocolate candy*)
 chili
 egg rolls
 enchilada sauce
 flavoring (*including natural and artificial*)
 marzipan
 mole sauce
 nougat

- Mandelonas are peanuts soaked in almond flavoring.

- Studies show most allergic individuals can safely eat peanut oil (**not** cold pressed, expelled, or extruded peanut oil).
- Arachis oil is peanut oil.
- Experts advise patients allergic to peanuts to avoid tree nuts as well.
- A study showed that unlike other legumes, there is a strong possibility of cross reaction between peanuts and lupine.
- Sunflower seeds are often produced on equipment shared with peanuts.

HOW TO READ A LABEL for a WHEAT-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain wheat or any of these ingredients:

bran
bread crumbs
bulgur
club wheat
couscous
cracker meal
durum
einkorn
emmer
farina
flour (all purpose, bread, cake, durum, enriched, graham, high gluten, high protein, instant, pastry, self-rising, soft wheat, steel ground, stone ground, whole wheat)
gluten
kamut
matzoh, matzoh meal (also spelled as matzo)

pasta
seitan
semolina
spelt
triticale
vital gluten
wheat (bran, germ, gluten, malt, sprouts)
wheat grass
whole wheat berries

May indicate the presence of wheat protein:

flavoring (including natural and artificial)
hydrolyzed protein
soy sauce
starch (gelatinized starch, modified starch, modified food starch, vegetable starch, wheat starch)
surimi

HOW TO READ A LABEL for a TREE NUT-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain nuts or any of these ingredients:

almonds
artificial nuts
beech nut
Brazil nuts
butternut
caponata
cashews
chestnuts
chinquapin
coconut
filberts/hazelnuts
gianduja (a nut mixture found in some chocolate)
ginko nut
hickory nuts
lichee/lychee nut
macadamia nuts
marzipan/almond paste
nan-gai nuts
natural nut extract (i.e., almond, walnut)
nougat
nut butters (i.e., cashew butter)
nut meal
nutmeat
nut oil
nut paste (i.e., almond paste)
nut pieces
pecans (Mashuga Nuts®)
pesto
pili nut
pine nuts (also referred to as Indian, piñon, pinyon, pignoli, pigñolia, and pignon nuts)
pistachios
praline
sheanut
walnuts

- Mandelonas are peanuts soaked in almond flavoring.
- Mortadella may contain pistachios.
- Natural and artificial flavoring may contain tree nuts.
- Experts advise patients allergic to tree nuts avoid peanuts as well.
- Talk to your doctor if you find other nuts not listed here.

HOW TO READ A LABEL for an EGG-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain eggs or any of these ingredients:

albumin (also spelled as albumen)
egg (dried, powdered, solids, white, yolk)
eggnog
lysozyme
mayonnaise
meringue (meringue powder)
surimi

May indicate the presence of egg protein:

flavoring (including natural and artificial)
lecithin
macaroni
marzipan
marshmallows
nougat
pasta

HOW TO READ A LABEL for a SHELLFISH-FREE DIET

Avoid foods that contain shellfish or any of these ingredients:

abalone
clams (cherrystone, littleneck, pismo, quahog)
cockle (periwinkle, sea urchin)
crab
crawfish (crayfish, ecrevisse)
lobster (langouste, langoustine, scampo, coral, tomalley)
mollusks
mussels
octopus
oysters
prawns
scallops
shrimp (crevette)
snails (escargot)
squid (calamari)

May indicate the presence of shellfish protein:

bouillabaisse
cuttlefish ink
fish stock
flavoring (including natural and artificial)
seafood flavoring (such as crab or clam extract)
surimi

Keep the following in mind:

- Any food served in a seafood restaurant may be cross contaminated with fish or shellfish.
- For some individuals, a reaction may occur from cooking odors or from handling fish or shellfish.
- Always carry medications and use them as soon as symptoms develop.

Diner With Food Allergies?

Take these precautions ...

- ✓ Activate your procedure for handling special requests.
- ✓ Listen to the diner CAREFULLY.
- ✓ Notify the manager, chef, or designated person.
- ✓ Answer questions honestly and accurately.
- ✓ Do not guess about ingredients. If you don't know, say so.
- ✓ Check ingredients again before serving.
- ✓ Use care to avoid cross-contact.
- ✓ Get help (911, ambulance) immediately if someone has an allergic reaction.

Common allergy-causing foods:

Peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, eggs, milk, wheat, and soy

Risky types of foods:

Desserts, sauces, meals with many ingredients, and salad bars and buffets

Possible causes of cross-contact (mixing a little of the allergy-causing food with otherwise safe food):

- ◆ Shared pans, fryers, grills, counters, dishes, slicers, trays, blenders, processors, chopping boards, and utensils
- ◆ Improperly cleaned equipment, tables, chairs, server's or preparer's hands, or utensils
- ◆ Shared utensils or accidental mixing at salad bars, garnishing stations, or buffets
- ◆ Removing an allergy-causing food from a meal without replacing the whole meal (such as scraping cheese from a cheeseburger)
- ◆ Spills or splattering while cooking

For some people, just a trace amount of the offending food can cause an allergic reaction.

REMEMBER – A FOOD ALLERGY REACTION CAN BE DEADLY!

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Food Allergies

what you need to know



Millions of people have food allergies that can range from mild to life-threatening.

Most Common Food Allergens



Peanuts



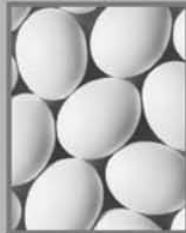
Tree nuts



Fish



Shellfish



Eggs



Milk



Wheat



Soy

*** Always let the guest make their own informed decision.**

When a guest informs you that someone in their party has a food allergy, follow the four R's below:

- **Refer** the food allergy concern to the chef, manager, or person in charge.
- **Review** the food allergy with the guest and check ingredient labels.
- **Remember** to check the preparation procedure for potential cross-contact.
- **Respond** to the guest and inform them of your findings.

*** Sources of Cross Contact:**

- Cooking oils, splatter and steam from cooking foods.

When any of the below come into contact with food allergens, all must be washed thoroughly in hot, soapy water:

- All utensils (spoons, knives, spatulas, tongs, etc.), cutting boards, bowls and hotel pans.
- Sheet pans, pots, pans and DON'T FORGET FRYERS AND GRILLS.

*** If a guest has an allergic reaction, notify management and call 911.**

Alergias Alimenticias

lo que necesita saber



Millones de personas padecen de alergias alimenticias que pueden variar desde casos leves hasta casos que amenazan la vida.

Alérgenos Alimenticios Más Comunes



Mani



Nueces



Pescado



Mariscos



Huevos



Lechería



Trigo



Soya

*** Siempre permita que el visitante tome sus propias decisiones informadas**

Cuando un visitante le informa que alguien en su grupo padece de una alergia alimenticia, siga las cuatro R que presentamos a continuación:

- **Refiera** el asunto sobre alergia alimenticia al Chef, Gerente o persona a cargo.
- **Revise** la alergia alimenticia con el visitante y examine las etiquetas de ingredientes.
- **Recuerde** examina los procesos de preparación para ver si se produce contacto cruzado.
- **Responda** a los visitantes e infórmeles de sus hallazgos

*** Fuentes de contacto cruzado de alimentos:**

- El salpique o vapor emanado del cocimiento de alimentos.

Lave con agua caliente y jabón, lo siguiente cuando han sido utilizados para cocinar o almacenar alimentos que causan alergias:

- Equipos, envases, mostradores y superficies para cortar.
- Las tablas para cortar alimentos, utensilios, espátulas, bandejas para galletas, ollas y sartenes, INCLUYE A LOS RECIPIENTES PARA FREIR y PARRILLERAS.

*** Si un visitante tiene una reacción alérgica, notifique a la gerencia y llame al 911.**

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For additional information about food allergies, contact:

The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network

11781 Lee Jackson Hwy., Suite 160

Fairfax, VA 22033

(800) 929-4040

www.foodallergy.org

Contact FAAN for a list of other resources, including our *Grocery Manufacturers Directory*, “How to Read a Label” cards, and our video *It Only Takes One Bite: Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis*.

Visit the FAAN website to sign up for free Special Allergy Alerts that contain notices of mislabeled or recalled food or advance notice of ingredient changes from responsible food manufacturers.

For a sample copy of the *Food Allergy News* newsletter, call FAAN or send an e-mail to faan@foodallergy.org.



For information about supporting food allergy research to find a cure, contact:

Food Allergy Initiative

1414 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 1804

New York, NY 10019

(212) 207-1974

www.foodallergyinitiative.org

For a list of allergists in your community, contact:

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

(800) 822-2762

www.aaaai.org

The American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

(800) 842-7777

www.acaai.org

For science-based information about food safety and nutrition, contact:

International Food Information Council

1100 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 430
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-6540
www.ific.org

For information about celiac disease, contact:

Celiac Disease Foundation

13251 Ventura Blvd., #1
Studio City, CA 91604
(818) 990-2354
www.celiac.org

Celiac Sprue Association

P.O. Box 31700
Omaha, NE 68131-0700
(402) 558-0600
www.csaceliacs.org

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