



Traveling to Australia With Food Allergies

Food allergies don't have to stop you from traveling. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, careful preparation and communication will help make your trip safe and enjoyable. This guide provides some helpful tips for traveling to Australia as well as information on understanding food labels and dining out at restaurants.

Medication

Bring a medical kit with all your medications, including extra adrenaline (epinephrine) auto-injectors. Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA) also recommends carrying an Action Plan for Anaphylaxis that is completed by a doctor and outlines recommended treatment in case of an allergic reaction. See ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis at allergy.org.au/health-professionals/ascia-plans-action-and-treatment.

Ask your doctor to write prescriptions that you can carry with you. The only brand of adrenaline (epinephrine) auto-injector available in Australia is EpiPen®.

Understand policies for carrying medication on board the aircraft. You may need to show the printed label that identifies the medication and who it is prescribed for. It is recommended that you also have the prescription label from the pharmacy. Have your doctor complete a Travel Plan that confirms your food allergy and travel requirements. The Travel Plan of the International Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Alliance may be downloaded at foodallergy.org/travelplan.

Emergencies

ADMINISTER ADRENALINE (EPINEPHRINE) AND DIAL 0-0-0

Always keep your adrenaline (epinephrine) auto-injector with you and easily accessible in the event of an emergency. Let your travel companions know about your allergies so they know what to do in case of an emergency. They should be made aware of where your auto-injectors and Action Plan for Anaphylaxis are located.

In the event of an emergency, administer adrenaline (epinephrine) according to the instructions in your Action Plan for Anaphylaxis. It is critical not to delay administering adrenaline (epinephrine). Next, contact emergency services for ambulance transport to hospital by calling **triple zero (0-0-0)**. All ambulances are equipped with adrenaline (epinephrine) and staffed to administer it in Australia. It is important to remain in hospital for at least 4 hours of observation because symptoms may return even though you appear to be recovering.

Familiarize yourself with the local emergency services phone number and dialing procedures. For example, some hotels may have specific procedures for dialing triple zero (0-0-0) from your room. Be aware of your location so that you can give the dispatcher specific information. Also familiarize yourself with where the nearest hospital is located: healthengine.com.au/find/Emergency-Department/Australia/.

If you currently live in a country with public/universal health care, you may want to purchase insurance prior to coming to Australia. Emergency care can be costly, and you should be able to access funds while abroad.

Understanding Food Labels in Australia

Reading food labels on packaged food is an important part of managing food allergies and avoiding your allergen. Federal law in Australia (**Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Food Standards Code—Standard 1.2.3**) requires that the labels of packaged foods must declare the presence of nine major allergens if any amount is used as an ingredient, additive, or processing agent. Added sulphites must be declared at or above 10 milligrams per kilogram. Some highly refined ingredients are exempt from declaration requirements.

- cereals containing gluten • shellfish • eggs • fish • peanuts • soybeans • milk • sesame seeds •
- tree nuts other than coconut • added sulphites in concentrations of 10 mg/kg or more •

Please be aware that different major allergens may be labeled in other countries. For example, the European Union has identified 14 allergens that must be declared on pre-packaged food labels. Individuals managing food allergies are encouraged to read all labels on all packages carefully every time.

In Australia, advisory labeling (i.e., precautionary statements such as “may contain,” “processed in a facility that also processes,” or “made on equipment with”) is voluntary and optional for manufacturers. There are no laws governing or requiring these statements, so they may or may not indicate if a product may contain a specific allergen.



Snacks and Meals

It is recommended that you travel with non-perishable food that is safe for you to eat in case you are unable to find allergen-free foods while traveling. Good options include dried pasta and snack bars that are free of your allergen. If you plan on staying in a hotel, consider staying in one that has a small kitchen or a refrigerator and microwave to store and prepare safe meals and snacks. Carefully clean all utensils, equipment and surfaces before first use. You may be able to purchase some of the same products in Australia as you can back home, but remember that the same products manufactured in different countries can contain different ingredients.

Dining Out at Restaurants

In Australia, foods that are not required to bear a label (such as freshly prepared foods) must still declare the major allergens named in **Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Food Standards Code—Standard 1.2.3**. The allergen information must either accompany or be displayed with the food or must be provided to the purchaser upon request.

When you are dining out with food allergies, planning ahead is important. Consider choosing chain restaurants. Each restaurant is likely to use the same ingredients and prepare foods the same way, and a growing number are allergy-aware. Before you go to the restaurant, there are some steps you can take to see if a particular restaurant is a good choice for you. Many restaurants have websites and post their menus online for you to review ahead of time. You can also call the restaurant and ask to speak to the chef or manager about your food allergies, menu items and meal preparation. We recommend calling during off-peak hours.

Communication between restaurants and customers with food allergies is essential to a safe dining experience. The restaurant manager and wait staff should know about your food allergy. Remind a manager or the head waiter about your allergies before you are seated. Communicate that you have a severe allergy rather than a food preference. If you declare your food allergy and are given food containing the allergen as an ingredient, the food service provider can be reported to health authorities and may face prosecution.

In addition to asking questions about the ingredients and preparation methods, carry a “**chef card**” that outlines the foods you must avoid. Present the card to the chef or manager for review. Chef cards can be downloaded in English and nine other languages at foodallergy.org/diningout.

When selecting your meal, keep it simple. If you have to ask complicated questions about the items on a menu, simple food made with basic ingredients may be the safest. Be sure to ask what is in your dish and how it is prepared. It is important that the restaurant understands what you are allergic to and takes steps to avoid cross-contact. You may want to speak to the manager and the chef, just to be sure.

Remember, never be embarrassed if you feel you are not communicating effectively. If you think a member of the wait staff does not understand your situation, always trust your instincts and seek out another staff member or manager. Sometimes, the safest choice is to avoid eating, and find a more appropriate meal somewhere else.

Resources

ASCIA (Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy): allergy.org.au

Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan (ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis):
allergy.org.au/health-professionals/ascia-plans-action-and-treatment

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (patient support organization): allergyfacts.org.au

Find an Emergency Department: healthengine.com.au/find/Emergency-Department/Australia/

Reading Food Labels: foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/foodallergies/Pages/Allergen-labelling.aspx

Dining Out: allergyfacts.org.au/living-with-the-risk/the-basics/out-and-about

Food Industry: allergenbureau.net/; afgc.org.au/

International Travel Plan: foodallergy.org/travelplan

