**National Allergy Strategy**

**Food Allergy Policy Template (General food service)**

**Before using this template, please note the following:**

* This template has been developed as an evidence based best practice tool for food allergen management in food service.
* This template is designed to be used as a starting point to develop a Food Allergy Policy if you do not have one, or it can be used to review your existing Food Allergy Policy for comprehensiveness.
* This template is editable, allowing you to make changes as required. Throughout the document, you will find [red text] where information can be inserted, edited and/or removed.
* At an operational level, a customised policy will specifically address the needs at your food premises.

**[Insert food service name]**

**Food Allergy Policy**

**Aim**

To assist food service staff in the management of food allergies in their food service.

**Risk**

Supplying incorrect food or drink to customers with a food allergy can result in adverse and potentially life-threatening allergic reactions (anaphylaxis).

**Definitions**

* **Allergic reaction:** occurs when someone develops symptoms following exposure to an allergen. Allergic reactions can range from mild to severe1.
* **Allergy:** when a person’s immune system reacts to substances in the environment that are harmless for most people. These substances are known as **allergens**2.
* **Allergy Chef Card:** a resource provided by Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia that outlines the foods an individual must avoid and designed to be given to food handlers (See <https://allergyfacts.org.au/shop/food-preparation-tools/chef-cards-x10>).
* **Anaphylaxis:** the most severe form of allergic reaction requiring urgent medical treatment3. For the purposes of recognition and emergency treatment, anaphylaxis signs and symptoms as stated on the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) Action Plan include4:

**Mild or moderate reactions**

* Swelling of lips, face, eyes
* Hives or welts
* Tingling mouth
* Abdominal pain, vomiting

**Anaphylaxis**

Watch for **any one** of the following signs of anaphylaxis:

* Difficult/noisy breathing
* Swelling of tongue
* Swelling/tightness in throat
* Difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
* Wheeze or persistent cough
* Persistent dizziness or collapse
* Pale and floppy (young children)
* **Food allergy:** when a person’s immune system reacts to food or drink, resulting in symptoms. Reactions can occur after eating a small amount, even trace amounts, of food or drink.
* **Food intolerance:** the inability to digest a food which can cause discomfort and distress but is not life-threatening. Food intolerance does not involve the immune system.5
* **Food service**: comprises (but is not limited to) the provision of food to consumers by cafes, restaurants, hotels, pubs, airlines, other holiday transport, hospitals and other health care or aged care facilities, bakeries, patissieres, caterers, camp services and boarding facilities (schools, universities) and educational facilities (school canteens and child care).
* **Food handler:** a person who directly engages in the handling of food, or who handles surfaces likely to come into contact with food, for a food business. Food handlers include cooks and chefs.
* **Front of House Staff:** all wait staff, servers, hosts, food runners, bussers, bar staff, sommeliers and managers who are often out on the floor, meeting, greeting and interacting with customers.

**Background**

* Ninety percent of food allergic reactions are caused by the common allergy causing foods. These are peanut, tree nuts (e.g. walnut, almond, cashew), egg, milk (dairy), fish, crustacea, molluscs, soy, sesame, wheat and lupin.
* While these foods cause around 90% of food allergic reactions in Australia, *any food* can cause an allergic reaction and food service providers need to accommodate *all* declared food allergies.
* Customers have a legal right to be able to access accurate information on food content.
* Food labels and Product Information Forms (PIFs) are required by law to declare if the food or beverage contains any of these common food allergens, noting that gluten (and the source of the gluten) needs to be declared not wheat, under the Food Standards Code.
* When a food does not have to have a label (such as food made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold), then the Food Standards Code requires the seller to provide information about the common food allergens to customers on request.

**Communication and documentation**

* **What:** Customers will be asked to disclose their food allergies or special dietary requirements when booking and ordering from the menu.

**How:** Menus and notice boards will contain a statement asking customers to advise front of house staff of any food allergies. In addition to verbally disclosing their food allergy, customers may ask a range of questions about ingredient and preparation methods and the food service will have processes in place for staff to be able to answer these.

**What:** Customers’ allergy information will be accurately recorded by front of house staff on the order, and verbally confirmed with the food handler(s) preparing the food. If the customer has brought an Allergy Chef Card this will be provided to the food handler(s).

**How:** All staff are responsible for checking that the meals provided match the order and are delivered to the correct customer.

**Food allergen management**

* [Insert food service name] will provide appropriate menu options for customers with food allergy.
* All incidents, including near misses, related to food allergy are to be clearly documented and corrective actions taken.
* Information about the ingredients of the food or drink must be up to date and available to staff and provided to the customer on request.

**Meal preparation and provision**

* Meal preparation processes will be undertaken wearing non-latex gloves, if gloves are used.
* Food handlers and front of house staff are responsible for checking that the meals provided match the order and are delivered to the correct customer.
* [Insert specific details applicable to the food service, *for example, allergy flags in meals*] will be used to identify standard meals and meals for customers with food allergy.
* Staff members will confirm the customer’s identity and allergy when delivering their order, if an Allergy Chef Card was provided, this will be returned to the customer with the meal.
* A meal for a customer with a food allergy must not be left at their table if the customer is not present.
* All ‘allergy meals and drinks’ are delivered to the customer without other meals in order to minimise the risk of providing the wrong meal to the customer with food allergy.
* All ‘allergy meals’ should be prepared and plated by a food handler who has completed the required food allergen management training [insert required training e.g. National Allergy Strategy: All about Allergens training for food service, All About Allergens: The next step for cooks and chefs, or equivalent in-house training].
* Menu items are prepared following standardised recipes approved by [insert relevant staff member]. Any changes to standardised menu items or recipes must be authorised by [insert relevant staff member].
* A food allergen menu matrix should include all menu items and be updated regularly and particularly if suppliers have changed. This matrix should be displayed in the kitchen and easily accessible for all staff members. A [food allergen menu matrix template](https://foodallergytraining.org.au/resources/allergen-menu-matrix) is available from the National Allergy Strategy.
* [Insert food service name] is registered to receive [FSANZ product recalls](https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/media/pages/subscriptionservice.aspx) with regards to products recalled for undeclared allergens.

**Food ordering and suppliers**

* An ingredient list or Product Information Form (PIF) must be provided **with every order** from suppliers to be used for assessing safety regarding allergen management. A copy of this and/or a copy of the product’s label should be kept in an easily accessible central place to:
  + assist with identifying changes in brands between audits, and
  + help making informed decisions regarding product substitution should this occur.
* A system must be in place to check changes to product formulation or processing (e.g. cross contamination risk).
* All products and ingredients used in the food service menu will be approved by [insert relevant staff member].
* All products are stored in sealed, labelled packages/containers to minimise the risk of cross contamination and ingredient labels are to be checked.
* [Insert food service name] has a process for managing products decanted from original packaging; labelling with the product name, ingredients, allergen statements and use by dates, date decanted.
* Designated allergen free ingredients should be stored **separately** from allergen free foods due to risk of cross contamination (e.g. wheat free flour stored separately to wheat-based flour)**.**

**Cleaning and sanitising**

* All meal storage and preparation areas are required to be cleaned with hot soapy water and a clean cloth/disposable paper.
* Prior to preparing a meal free of a specific allergen, check that food items have been stored appropriately and ingredient labels are checked for the appropriate allergen.
* Where possible, to avoid cross-contamination, meals free of a specific allergen should be prepared immediately after cleaning, and before meals containing allergens are prepared. A separate cleaned bench for preparing meals free of specific allergens can be considered.
* If more than one allergy meal is being prepared, processes are needed to prevent cross contamination from one allergy meal to another, as customers may be allergic to different foods.
* All utensils, equipment and preparation areas must be cleaned thoroughly between preparation of different menu items and ingredients.

**Education and training**

* [Food service name] will ensure that appropriate information, education, and training are available and implemented for all staff involved in the handling and preparation of food for individuals with food allergies and food intolerances.
  + All staff will be expected to have completed initial training relevant to their position as mandatory training. [insert required training e.g. National Allergy Strategy: All about Allergens training for food service, All About Allergens: The next step for cooks and chefs, or equivalent in-house training]
  + All staff will be required to undertakerefresher training relevant to their role, at least every 2 years. [insert required training e.g. National Allergy Strategy: All about Allergens training for food service, All About Allergens: The next step for cooks and chefs, or equivalent in-house training]
* Training records are kept, documenting which staff have completed training, what training they have completed and when they last completed the training.
* All relevant relief or casual staff complete a site induction which includes food allergen management training

**Front of House Staff**

All wait staff, servers, host/hostess, food runners, bussers, bartenders, sommeliers and managers will complete:

* [insert required training e.g. National Allergy Strategy: All about Allergens training for food service, or equivalent in-house training] which includes allergy awareness.
* In-house training regarding food allergy meal ordering, delivery and verifying food allergies with staff and customers at [Insert food service name].
* National Allergy Strategy All about Allergens online training course, for anyone working in food service is available free of charge: [www.foodallergytraining.org.au](http://www.foodallergytraining.org.au)

**Cooks and Chefs**

* Complete [insert required training e.g. National Allergy Strategy: All about Allergens training for food service, All About Allergens: The next step for cooks and chefs, or equivalent in-house training] which includes allergy awareness training.
* Complete education regarding food allergy meal delivery, meal preparation including checking ingredients, cross contamination, plating accurately and verifying any allergy or special dietary requirements with staff and customers at [Insert food service name]
* Complete National Allergy Strategy ‘All about Allergens’ online training course, available free of charge: [www.foodallergytraining.org.au](http://www.foodallergytraining.org.au)
* Complete National Allergy Strategy ‘All about Allergens: The next step for cooks and chefs’ online training course, available free of charge: [www.foodallergytraining.org.au](http://www.foodallergytraining.org.au)

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| **References** |
| 1ASCIA. (2020). [Information for patients, consumers and carers: Glossary of terms](https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/information) |
| 2ASCIA. (2019). [Information for patients, consumers and carers: What is allergy?](https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/about-allergy/what-is-allergy) |
| 3ASCIA. (2020). [Information for health professionals: Anaphylaxis resources](https://www.allergy.org.au/hp/anaphylaxis) |
| 4ASCIA. (2020). [Information for health professionals: First Aid Plan for Anaphylaxis](https://www.allergy.org.au/hp/anaphylaxis/first-aid-for-anaphylaxis) |
| 5ASCIA. (2019). [Information for patients, consumers and carers: Food intolerance](https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/food-other-adverse-reactions/food-intolerance) |

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| Useful resources |
| All about Allergens Resource Hub - <https://foodallergytraining.org.au/resources/> |
| Food Allergy Aware - <https://foodallergyaware.org.au/> |
| [Insert other relevant resources] |

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| Date First Issued: | [Insert date issued] | Last Reviewed: |  | Review Date: |  |
| Approved by: | [Insert relevant staff member] | | | Date: |  |