

STAY SAFE WITH SOCIETY



PREVENTING FOOD ALLERGIES

A food allergy is an abnormal response to a food, triggered by the body's immune system, that occurs in about 5 percent of children and 4 percent of adults in the United States. The response may be mild, or in rare cases it can be associated with a severe and life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. Eight foods account for 90 percent of all food-related allergic reactions: **milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (e.g., walnuts, almonds, cashews, pistachios, pecans), wheat, soy, fish, and shellfish.**

Managers play a critical role in staff awareness and education. Food service establishments should have a food allergy management plan and documented training for all employees. Managers should periodically conduct food allergy training to ensure that both new hires and existing employees are aware of food allergy issues and properly prepared to cook and serve responsibly.

Care must be taken in the kitchen to avoid contact between allergenic and allergy-safe foods. There might be cross-contact, resulting in each food containing small amounts of the other food that may be invisible to us.

For example, if a knife is used to chop shellfish, is wiped clean, and is then used to slice a piece of meat, tiny invisible particles of the shellfish may be transferred onto the meat portion and cause an allergic reaction in a shellfish-sensitive customer. That's why all equipment and utensils should be cleaned with warm, soapy water before being used to prepare allergen-free food. Even a trace of food on a spoon, knife, or spatula that is invisible to us can cause an allergic reaction.

When cooking allergen-free meals, the staff should use utensils and pans that have been thoroughly washed with soap and warm water. If cooking several foods at the same time, cook the allergen-free meal first. Keep it covered and away from any splatters that might come from other foods that are cooking nearby. If employees handled an allergy-causing food, they should wash their hands with soap and warm water before handling or serving the allergen-free meal.

**EVEN A TRACE OF FOOD
ON A SPOON, KNIFE,
OR SPATULA THAT IS
INVISIBLE TO US CAN
CAUSE AN ALLERGIC
REACTION.**

A Small Detail
That Can Make a
Big Difference.

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Checklist:

- If a guest is having an allergic reaction, call 911 and get medical help immediately!
- If a mistake occurs with a special order that involves removing allergens, the only acceptable way to correct the situation is to have the kitchen staff discard the incorrect order and remake it.
- Notices should be placed on menus to draw attention to foods that contain common allergens.
- Employees should understand how cross-contact can occur. Keep in mind that improper garnishing or handling of a dish can contaminate an otherwise safe meal.
- 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.

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