

FOOD ALLERGIES

What is a Food Allergy?

A food allergy is a specific type of adverse food reaction involving the immune system. The body produces an allergic antibody to a food. Once a specific food is ingested and binds with the antibody, an allergic response ensues. A food allergy should not be confused with food intolerance. Food intolerance refers to an abnormal response to a food or additive, but it differs from an allergy in that it does not involve the immune system. One main difference is that food allergies can result in an immediate, life-threatening response.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of a food allergy usually develop within about an hour after eating the offending food. The most common signs and symptoms of a food allergy include:

- Hives, itching, or skin rash
- Swelling of the lips, face, tongue and throat, or other parts of the body
- Wheezing, nasal congestion, or trouble breathing
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting

In a severe allergic reaction to food – called anaphylaxis – you may have more extreme versions of the above reactions. Or you may experience life-threatening signs and symptoms such as:

- Swelling of the throat and air passages that makes it difficult to breathe
- Shock, with a severe drop in blood pressure
- Rapid, irregular pulse
- Loss of consciousness

If you encounter a customer experiencing a food allergic reaction, seek medical help immediately. Even if an epinephrine has already been administered, call 911 or the local emergency number. Also, be sure to complete an incident report.

Preventing Allergic Reactions

When customers say they have a food allergy, train employees to follow these steps to help prevent an allergic reaction:

- Describe dishes in detail
- Identify ingredients
- Suggest menu items
- Avoid cross-contamination during food prep
 - Wash hands and change gloves before prep
 - Sanitize all cookware, utensils, and equipment
 - Use separate cookware and equipment when prepping and cooking food

Major Food Allergens

FALCPA, a comprehensive food labeling law, has been in effect since January 1, 2006. Under FALCPA, food labels are required to state clearly whether the food contains a major food allergen. The following foods are defined as major food allergens and account for 90% of all food allergies in the United States:

- Milk
- Fish
- Eggs
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Soybeans and soy products
- Shellfish such as crab, lobster, and shrimp
- Tree nuts such as almonds, walnuts, and pecans








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

*** Take guest food allergy requests & questions seriously.**

*** 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.

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

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For more information about food allergies, and to download the poster shown above, contact FAAN™ (The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network) at (800) 929-4040 or visit www.foodallergy.org.