

# Food businesses and allergens

Food allergy is very serious, causing illness and even death. Food allergies occur in around 1 in 20 children and 1 in 50 adults. The most severe allergic reaction is known as anaphylaxis – which is potentially life threatening.

Food businesses must be aware of their responsibility to declare or manage allergens, or the requirement to recall, or the requirement to quarantine recalled products.

Most people who have severe food allergic reactions in Australia have them when eating food prepared by another person. Reactions and fatalities have occurred as a result of food purchased in food service businesses, and from undeclared allergens in packaged foods. In Australia the majority of recalls are due to undeclared allergens in packaged foods. Visit the [FSANZ recall page](#) for up to date information.

## Food allergens

Even very small amounts of an allergen in food can trigger a reaction. The most common things that trigger reactions in Australia are listed in the [Food Standards Code](#) Standard 1.2.3:

- > Peanuts
- > Milk and milk products
- > Crustaceans (shellfish)
- > Sesame seeds
- > Lupin
- > Cereals containing gluten namely, wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt and their hybridised strains
- > Added sulphites (in amounts greater than 10mg/Kg)
- > Tree nuts
- > Egg
- > Fish
- > Soybeans

## Providing information to consumers

Information about allergens can be provided by:

- > providing information about food allergens in food if requested by a customer (food service such as restaurants, cafes, takeaway)
- > declaring allergens on the label (usually in the ingredient list)
- > displaying information about allergens next to food on sale (if it's not packaged)
- > providing information with the food (food sold for catering purposes, or where food is not in a package)

If a business doesn't provide this information, or if an allergen is found in food that was not declared on the label, they may be breaking the law, and putting the consumer at risk of illness, injury, or even death.

## Information for specific sectors

- > Fact sheet – Allergen labelling for manufacturers, retailers, caterers, importers, home businesses and food sold at markets
- > Fact sheet – Allergens in Food Service



## Useful websites for food allergen information

There are extensive resources available for food businesses regarding allergens, with these being the most relevant for food businesses.

### About allergens

#### **National Allergy Strategy** <http://www.nationalallergystrategy.org.au/>

This organisation exists to improve the health and quality of life of Australians with allergic diseases, and minimise the burden of allergic diseases on individuals, their carers, healthcare services and the community. It has extensive free downloadable resources.

#### **Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia** <http://www.allergyfacts.org.au/>

This organisation supports individuals and carers in managing allergy and anaphylaxis. It has extensive free downloadable resources.

#### **FSANZ Food allergen portal**

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/foodallergies/foodallergenportal/Pages/default.aspx>

This food allergen portal was created by the Allergen Collaboration to provide different sectors in the community with links to best practice food allergen resources and key messages to promote in the different sectors.

### Food service allergen training

#### **National Allergy Strategy** [www.foodallergytraining.org.au](http://www.foodallergytraining.org.au)

A free online training package for food service. A certificate is available on completion of this 1.5 hour long course. Extensive food allergen management resources for all types of food business, including hospitals, schools and child care centres.

#### **Do food safely** <http://dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au/index.php/en/>

DoFoodSafely is a free, non-accredited, online learning program provided by the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria and proudly supported by Queensland Health and South Australia Health.

### For food manufacturers and industry

#### **The VITAL Program** <http://www.allergenbureau.net/vital/>

VITAL (Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling program) is a standardised allergen risk assessment process for food industry. It assists food manufacturers to assess ingredients and processing conditions that contribute towards the allergen status of the finished product. There are also resources to explain allergen labelling.

#### **National Measurement Institute (NMI)**

[www.measurement.gov.au/Services/FoodTesting/Pages/AllergenandIntoleranceProteins.aspx](http://www.measurement.gov.au/Services/FoodTesting/Pages/AllergenandIntoleranceProteins.aspx)

The National Measurement Institute is an Australian laboratory which can test foods for the presence of allergens.

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## For more information

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