

Food Service Employee Allergen Awareness

Texas Department of State Health Services | Consumer Protection Division | Food & Drug Section | Retail Food Safety Operations

Food allergens present a **SERIOUS** health risk to you and your customers and may even cause **DEATH**. Yet some simple actions can assure that you and your customers are fully informed, and that everyone has a safe experience. An allergic reaction is an immune system response. In some people, a food allergy can cause severe symptoms or even a life-threatening reaction known as *anaphylaxis*.

9 Major Food Allergens



Peanuts



Crustacean Shellfish



Eggs



Tree Nuts



Wheat



Fish



Milk



Soy



Sesame

Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction

- Hives
- Flushed skin or rash
- Tingling or itchy sensation in mouth
- Face, tongue, and/or lip swelling
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Coughing or wheezing
- Dizziness and/or lightheadedness
- Swelling of throat and/or vocal cords
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of consciousness

Response to Allergic Reaction

Call 911 and seek emergency medical attention!

- Tell the person experiencing any of these symptoms to stop eating the food immediately.
- If the person has emergency medication, like *epinephrine*, and needs to use it, **trained food service employees** may assist the person to administer the medication.



Procedures for Preventing an Allergic Reaction

- 1. Food Service Employee Awareness:**
 - Be familiar with the current menu.
 - Be able to identify all major food allergens used in the food establishment.
 - Contact your supervisor for necessary allergen information.
- 2. Prevent Cross-Contact of Allergens:**
 - Use different cutting surfaces before and after handling food with allergens.
 - Clean and sanitize equipment and food contact surfaces before and after handling food with allergens.
 - Wash hands and change gloves before and after handling potential food allergens.

Food Allergy Risk Factors

- Cross-contact of allergens with food not containing allergens
- Age
- Lack of menu information
- Asthma
- Family history
- Lack of knowledge
- Other allergies



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