

Food allergens and business responsibilities continued...

In our last newsletter we highlighted the significance of allergens in food businesses but after some recent disappointing sampling results we felt it was important to reinforce allergens again.

A most recent case of a local student dying because of a suspected food anaphylaxis highlights how important getting allergen claims and processes right.

FOOD BUSINESSES MUST NOT:

- make allergen claims such as Gluten Free, Dairy Free, Nut free if you do not have the processes in place to guarantee this claim.
- make confusing claims such as Gluten Free Option, Vegan (ie indicating egg/dairy free) if you do not have the processes in place to guarantee the claim.
- make an allergen free claim in the menu but then place a disclaimer on the same menu that there may be traces of the allergen. This will not be considered a defence should there be an associated anaphylaxis.

For a business that wants to provide a gluten option but cannot guarantee gluten free, the Food Standards Code allows a "low gluten" claim for foods that have less than 0.02 % of the allergen present ie traces.

FOOD BUSINESSES MUST:

- have the appropriate processes and cleaning procedures to guarantee an allergen free claim. Such processes include:
 - ✓ verifying all ingredients are free of the allergens claimed.
 - ✓ good storage/separation of allergen free ingredients and food.
 - ✓ using separate or recently washed equipment/utensils when preparing allergen free meals.
 - ✓ preparing allergen free food in a separate area if available.
 - ✓ pre-preparing all allergen free food in a recently washed preparation area at the start of the day's operations.
- have a good communication process between front and back of house when taking and serving orders of allergen free meals so there is no chance that meals can be confused and the chef/cook and waiting staff are aware of the allergen free request. This can be done by face to face communication between staff or clear direction on the docket or even better, a combination of both.
 - be able to separate and easily distinguish that meals that are allergen free when serving the customer.
 - train all staff on the following main allergens and whether they are in the food or the ingredients used:
 - ✓ cereals containing gluten and their products – namely, wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt, and their hybrid strains.
 - ✓ crustacea and their products.
 - ✓ egg and egg products.
 - ✓ fish and fish products.
 - ✓ milk and milk products.
 - ✓ peanuts and peanut products.
 - ✓ tree nuts and tree nut products (does not include coconut).
 - ✓ sesame seeds and sesame seed products.
 - ✓ soybean and soybean products.
 - ✓ added sulfites in concentrations of 10 mg/kg or more.
 - ✓ Lupins.

A way of doing this is to create a food matrix for your business:

- properly store allergen- containing ingredients to prevent cross contamination with other ingredients or food ie clean sealable containers.
- regularly review menus, processes and staff knowledge about allergens. It is recommended staff to undergo allergen training. A free online course is available at <https://foodallergytraining.org.au/>

Should you have further queries regarding allergens in your business please ring the Environmental Health Unit on **9599 4417**

National Allergy Strategy – Food allergen menu matrix (template)

✓ indicates allergen is present in the menu item

Menu item	Tree nuts														Gluten containing cereals									
	Milk (dairy)	Egg	Fish	Crustacean	Mollusc	Sesame	Lupin	Peanut	Soy	Almond	Brazil nut	Cashew	Hazelnut	Macadamia	Pecan	Pine nut	Pistachio	Walnut	Wheat	Gluten	Barley	Oats	Rye	

Completed by: [name & position] Date: Signature: Page 1 of 1

Food business responsibilities if staff are ill

It is the duty of all businesses to ensure that all staff involved in food handling are not ill or showing symptoms of food borne illness to avoid possible food contamination.

Food handlers who report symptoms that indicate they may be suffering from a foodborne disease (diarrhoea, fever, vomiting, sore throat with fever, or jaundice) should not return to their usual duties until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours or have a doctor's clearance.

The exemption to this rule may be that:

- if the food handler knows they have those symptoms due to another reason; for example vomiting because of pregnancy or diarrhoea from a diagnosed bowel disorder.
- the staff member can undertake non-food handling activities such as office work or cleaning non-food areas.



Amendments to the Food Act 1984

A range of amendments to the Food Act 1984 commenced on the 1 July 2021.

The amendments include some important changes including change of ownership, cancellation of registration and change of Food Safety Program type.



Change of Ownership / Cancellation for Food Businesses

The change of ownership process replaces the Transfer of Food Act Registration. This means that when an existing proprietor leaves or sells a food business their registration will be cancelled, and any prospective proprietor will need to reapply for a new registration.

If you are the proprietor of an existing registered food business and wish to cancel your registration, please notify the Environmental Health Unit via email at envhealth@bayside.vic.gov.au. And clearly mention the reason for cancellation (e.g. sold the business, re-locating the business, closing down the business... etc).

Change of Food Safety Program Type

Another amendment to the Food Act 1984 now requires proprietors to notify Council when the food safety program changes during a registration period.

Change of the food safety program type, such as switching from using a standard food safety program to using a non-standard food safety program (or vice-versa), will place an obligation on the proprietor to notify the Council of the change within 14 days.

Should you have further queries regarding the Food Act changes please ring the Environmental Health Unit on **9599 4417**

Business grants and support

Information about State grants and support to help your workplace plan and respond to COVID-19 can be found here:

www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/business-grants-and-support



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