

Food Allergen Fact Sheet

Food allergens and intolerances are increasing in Australia with **1 in every 5 people** reporting food sensitivities.

It is important to protect your customers and business by being allergy aware. Becoming 'Well Informed on Sensitivities Awareness' or 'WISA' you can:

- Meet your legal obligation to serve food that is safe and suitable for human consumption;
- Comply with law by declaring ingredients in food when asked by a customer. Pre-packaged food must comply with labelling requirements;
- Protect your business reputation, avoiding legal costs and a potential criminal conviction;
- Improve confidence with your food processes and practices;
- Boost customer confidence in your food products;
- Support your food safety program with a better understanding of ingredients;
- Prevent cross contamination preparation of foods such as sauces with contact surfaces.

Food Allergen and Food Intolerance

Food allergies and food intolerance are not the same.

A food allergen has severe consequence when someone sensitive to the allergen consumes the product. A common food allergen must be declared by law.

A food intolerance may have uncomfortable and debilitating effects, but is not life

threatening and is not required to be declared by law. Despite this, food businesses must have food ingredient information available for customers on request.

Food Allergen	Food Intolerance
<p>An immune response to a particular food. Reaction may be immediate or delayed. Can be life threatening. Food allergens that MUST be declared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• crustaceans and their products• peanuts and their products• tree nuts and their products• sesame seeds and their products• fish and fish products• egg and egg products• milk and milk products• gluten and cereals containing gluten• added sulphites (concentrations 10mg/kg+) <p>Symptoms of a reaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tingling of mouth• hives, welts or body redness• swelling of face and lips• vomiting, abdominal pain• anaphylaxis: difficulty breathing, swelling of tongue, swelling or tightness of throat, difficulty talking or hoarse, wheeze or persistent cough, loss of consciousness, collapse, pale and floppy	<p>Not related to an immune response, rather a chemical reaction. Due to a substance within the food or a metabolic defect. Not life threatening, but can be uncomfortable and debilitating. Common intolerance foods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• lactose in cow's milk• flavour enhancers (eg MSG)• food additives• strawberries, citrus fruits and tomatoes• wine• histamines and amines <p>Symptoms experienced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• bloating• abdominal pain• diarrhoea• vomiting• headache or migraine• palpitations• sweating• nervousness/tremour



Step-by-step guide to identifying food allergens in your products

Step 1

Obtain an accurate list of all ingredients for each food product you produce (including compound ingredients and processing aids).

Step 2

Familiarise yourself with the food allergen fact sheets visit www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety/food-businesses/food-allergen-awareness.

Step 3

Assess each ingredient to determine whether it is an allergen. Use the allergen fact sheet to assist you, as well as carefully checking labels and information from suppliers. Visit www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/safetystandards/ to access food additive information (see Standard 1.3.1 for information on food additives).

Step 4

Keep all details of ingredients for each menu item with your food allergen matrix (see example below) for easy reference.

Step 5

Develop your allergen matrix. Update the matrix as needed.

Step 6

Identify cross-contamination risks at your premises by assessing all food preparation and storage processes (check your Food Safety Program).

Food Allergen Matrix

This is a useful reference tool to quickly identify food allergens that are present within foods and/or meals.

By listing all allergens across the top of the matrix and all foods on offer down the side

of the matrix, you can quickly check what allergens are present in what food.

Once established within a food premise it needs to be updated regularly, especially when new foods are added to menus or

existing ones are changed, and staff will need to be trained on how to interpret the information.

Business name									
Food safety supervisor									
Date of last update					Date of review				
Food item	Crustacean	Peanut	Tree Nut	Sesame	Fish	Egg	Milk	Gluten	Sulphites
Food A	X				X	X			
Food B				X				X	X
Food C		X			X			X	
Food D	X		X		X		X	X	

More information

The Department of Health food allergen and intolerance information kit provides guidance to food business proprietors to help them understand and better manage food sensitivities.

What information does the kit provide?

The information kit provides the **what**, **why** and **how** questions to identify food sensitivities (allergens or additives) in

food, how to implement a food allergen matrix and steps to take to become a 'WISA' (Well Informed on Sensitivities Awareness) food business.

It contains the following:

What are food allergens and intolerances and how do they affect my business?

Why do I need to do anything about food

allergens and intolerances?

How can I help my customers and comply?

To obtain a copy of the kit visit:

www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety/food-businesses/food-allergen-awareness