

# Food Safety Scoop



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## Special Points of Interest

- Why do Food Allergies Matter?
- Signs of an Allergic Reaction
- 8 Major Food Allergens
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- Quiz



This newsletter is brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council, which is a joint collaboration between Yavapai County Community Health Services and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

The FSIC meets bimonthly to discuss issues in the food service industry and ways to bring food safety information to the public.

For more information, please call 928-445-6590 ext. 227 or visit our website at: [extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/](http://extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/)

## Why Do Food Allergies Matter?

**It can be a matter of life and death:** Each year in the US there are 30,000 emergency room visits, 2,000 hospitalizations and 150 deaths due to food allergies. A survey of people with food allergies found that one in three had a reaction in a restaurant. It is often incorrectly assumed that customers with food allergies could safely eat a small amount of the food they are allergic to. This is not true! The amount of exposure isn't

negotiable. Some people can have a severe reaction if their food is simply prepared on the same equipment as food that contains their allergen. An exposure of any amount must be avoided.

**It's the law:** According to section 2-102.11 of the FDA Food code, food establishments should have a person in charge (PIC) during all hours of operation who is knowledgeable about major food allergens, the symptoms of an allergic

reaction and proper cleaning procedures to prevent cross-contamination.

In addition, the PIC should ensure that all employees are trained in food safety issues, including food allergy awareness.

This edition of Food Safety Scoop will help you and your staff keep your customers safe from accidental exposure to allergens.

## Signs of an Allergic Reaction

Just as with seasonal allergies, a food allergy is the body's immune system responding to a something that it mistakenly believes is harmful. Food allergies are derived from proteins in the food.

The response from the body varies depending on the individual and can range from very mild, such as itching of the mouth or eyes, to severe enough to cause death without immediate treatment.

Common symptoms of a food allergy include:

- Tingling or itching in the mouth, throat, face or scalp
- Rash or hives
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Cramps and diarrhea
- Swelling of the face, eyes or throat
- Anaphylaxis: closure of the throat, which can cause death if not treated.

Remember that customers might be dining with someone who is unaware that they have a food allergy. For this reason, ALL employees are required to be able to recognize these symptoms and know what to do if they see a customer showing these symptoms.

Employees should call 911 and stay with the customer until help arrives.

# The 8 Major Food Allergens

Any food can cause an allergic reaction, but these 8 food allergens account for 90% of all food allergies in the United States. They include:



**Milk**



**Eggs**



**Peanuts**



**Tree Nuts**



**Fish**



**Shellfish**



**Wheat**



**Soy**

## Preventing Allergic Reactions

Preventing exposure to allergens requires extra attention from managers and employees. It is up to the manager to implement appropriate policies and mandate employee training. Employees must recognize the importance of these trainings and always keep in mind that the tiniest amount of exposure can be deadly. Servers should never guess about menu items. If unsure, they should ask the manager or cook on duty.

Minimally, one employee each shift should be thoroughly familiar with all ingredients being used. In

addition, cooks should not make substitutions for their listed ingredients.

Cooks should read all labels carefully and know how to prepare menu items to be allergen-free, if requested. The prep area and any equipment used should be cleaned and sanitized to remove all traces of allergens. Separate cutting boards and utensils can be purchased and used only for allergen-free foods.

Be sure to label all menu items that contain a major food allergen as such.

When a customer indicates they have an allergy:

- server should mark the ticket
- ensure the kitchen staff is aware
- server should bring out the allergen-free meal separately
- serve any sauces on the side
- check with the table regularly

All of these precautions, if followed correctly, should prevent accidental exposure to allergens.

## Quiz

1. Which of the following are symptoms of a food allergy?
  - A. Wheezing
  - B. Hives
  - C. Vomiting
  - D. All of the above
2. Food allergies are derived from:
  - A. Proteins
  - B. Lipids
  - C. Starches
  - D. Sugars
3. **True or False?** People with food allergies will be fine if they are only exposed to a very small amount of the allergen.
4. **Yes or No?** Is this a safe procedure? A cafeteria worker is making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and runs out of peanut butter. She substitutes almond butter for the rest of the sandwiches.
5. **Yes or No?** Is this a safe procedure? A food worker cuts sandwiches on a cutting board and then rinses the crumbs off and uses the board to cut fruit.

### Resources:

1. National Environmental Health Association. 2013 Professional Food Manager 4th Edition, 720 South Colorado Boulevard, Suite 1000-N, Denver, Colorado 80246
2. <https://www.foodallergy.org>
3. FDA Food Code 2013

Answers: 1.D 2.A 3.F 4.N 5.N

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