



HOW-TO GUIDE

on using the Think Food Allergy resources



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Getting started

This is your how-to guide for the foodservice resources available at **ThinkFoodAllergy.ca**.

You may use the resources to help start your allergen management program, or to augment what you already have in place.

The resources have been developed in collaboration with members of the foodservice industry, and serve as a best practice reference.



Understanding food allergy

Food allergy is a serious medical condition that impacts over 3 million Canadians. The resources below can be used as training materials for foodservice staff to help them understand what food allergy is, and why it should be taken seriously.

“What is food allergy” video

3-minute training video with basic information on what food allergy is and why foodservice staff need to take it seriously.

How can it be used?

When onboarding new staff and reinforced on a regular basis, at least annually.

Tips

- Ensure all foodservice staff watch the video in full.
- Obtain any staff training sign-offs.
- Pulse check staff knowledge through question asking.
- Reinforce the message often during regular shift meetings, or more frequently as needed.

WHAT IS FOOD ALLERGY?

FOOD ALLERGY IS A SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION

Food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts to something in a particular food as if it were harmful and causes an allergic reaction, which can sometimes be life-threatening.

Did you know?
Food allergy impacts **3 MILLION CANADIANS** and **1-IN-2 HOUSEHOLDS** make decisions based on food allergy, every day.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

To prevent reactions, people with food allergy need to avoid the food they are allergic to and depend on YOU to provide a safe meal option.

- **Always check ingredients**
Having access to accurate ingredient information can prevent a serious allergic reaction.
 - ✓ Always check ingredients
 - ✓ Prepare food safely for a food allergy order
 - ✓ Avoid cross-contamination (also known as cross contact)
 - ✓ Deliver the right meal, the right way
- **Take food allergy requests seriously**
Follow your establishment's food allergy policies when you get a request. Please ask your manager or leader if you have any questions!

The most common food allergens in Canada
People can be allergic to any food, but the 10 most common foods are called priority food allergens by Health Canada:

Egg, Fish, Milk, Mustard, Peanut, Sesame, Soy, Tree nuts, Wheat and Triticale, Crustaceans

* Crustaceans and mollusks are sometimes collectively referred to as shellfish.
** Tree nuts include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts.
(e.g. scallops, clams)

Visit ThinkFoodAllergy.ca for free resources and useful tools.

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“What is food allergy?” fact sheet

1-page sheet that provides highlights on food allergy and actions foodservice employees can take to prevent allergic reactions.

How can it be used?

For training and education, communication and shift huddles, and as onboarding material.

Tips

- Print the PDF in colour or for a paperless approach, incorporate it into your virtual training program.
- Deliver this in the next team meeting or training (suggested to accompany the “What is food allergy” video).
- Obtain any staff training sign-offs.
- Pulse check staff knowledge through question asking.
- Reinforce the message often during regular shift meetings, or more frequently as needed.
- Consider using this as a poster.

Understanding anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis (pronounced anna-fill-axis) is the most serious type of allergic reaction. The resource below can be used in training foodservice staff to help them understand anaphylaxis and what to do if they see someone experiencing it.

WHAT IS ANAPHYLAXIS?

ANAPHYLAXIS IS THE MOST SERIOUS TYPE OF ALLERGIC REACTION AND CAN BE LIFE-THREATENING.

Anaphylaxis (pronounced anna-fill-axis) must always be considered a medical emergency requiring immediate treatment. People with food allergy are at risk of having anaphylaxis. To prevent reactions, they need to avoid the food they are allergic to.

HOW IS ANAPHYLAXIS TREATED?

Epinephrine is the first-line treatment for severe allergic reactions and should be used immediately.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE SOMEONE HAVING ANAPHYLAXIS?

Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency service and inform your manager or leader right away.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ANAPHYLAXIS

Symptoms can include the following and can happen quickly (within a few minutes to up to 2 hours):

- Skin**
hives, swelling, itching, warmth, redness
- Breathing**
coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, throat tightness, hoarse voice, nasal congestion or hay fever-like symptoms (runny, itchy nose and watery eyes, sneezing), trouble swallowing, choking feeling
- Stomach**
nausea, pain or cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- Heart**
paler than normal skin colour/blue colour, weak pulse, passing out, dizziness or lightheadedness

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“What is anaphylaxis?” fact sheet

1-page sheet that provides important information on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis, and how to respond.

How can it be used?

For training and education, communication and shift huddles, onboarding material, and reinforcing how to respond in an emergency.

Tips

- Print the PDF in colour or for a paperless approach, incorporate it into your virtual training program.
- Deliver this in the next team meeting or training.
- Obtain any staff training sign-offs.
- Pulse check staff knowledge by asking questions.
- Reinforce the message often during regular shift meetings, or more frequently as needed.
- Consider using this as a poster – such as near your establishment’s health and safety board – this information helps protect employee safety too!

The importance of communication

Clear communication is essential for effectively managing food allergy in foodservice and plays a key role in preventing allergic reactions. The below resource serves as awareness for foodservice staff on the importance of clear communication when serving a guest with food allergy.



Poster

Printable poster that provides important information on the high-level steps to communication when serving a food allergic guest, reinforcing food allergy as a serious condition and keeping it top of mind.

How can it be used?

For employee awareness on the steps that need to be taken when serving a guest with food allergy.

Tips

- Print the PDF in colour or for a paperless approach, incorporate it into your virtual training program.
- Deliver this in the next team meeting or training.
- Pulse check staff knowledge by asking questions.
- Reinforce the message often during regular shift meetings, or more frequently as needed.
- Place the poster in a high-traffic area at eye level.
- Avoid placing in oversaturated areas containing other communication.
- Replace or rotate poster regularly (keep it fresh!).

Always check ingredients

Individuals with food allergy need to know what's in their food to navigate a safe meal choice. They depend on foodservice staff to provide them with accurate ingredient information. The below resource can be used to check ingredients and provide accurate allergen information when serving a food allergic guest.

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Food Allergy Canada

Food allergen menu matrix

C indicates menu item CONTAINS the allergen
M indicates menu item MAY CONTAIN the allergen

Menu Item	Custard/cream and fillings	Egg	Fish	Milk	Mustard	Peanut	Sesame	Soy	Wheat and Gluten	Almonds	Brazil nuts	Cashews	Hazelnuts (filberts)	Macadamia nuts	Pecans	Pine Nuts	Pistachios	Walnuts

Completed by: _____ Date: _____ For more tools and resources, visit ThinkFoodAllergy.ca

*The food allergen menu matrix must be reviewed and updated regularly, including for any recipe changes, ingredient substitutions, or any other time there are changes to the recipe or supplier statements.

Food allergen menu matrix

A fillable PDF that easily captures the priority food allergen information (“Contains” or “May contains”) for standardized menu items in a foodservice setting.

How can it be used?

To easily reference priority food allergen ingredients for standardized menu items.

This template requires an update for any ingredient changes. It does not replace the need for staff communication to confirm that there have been no changes or substitutions to the ingredients. It is not recommended for daily specials, featured dishes, or menu items that have frequent changes to their ingredients.

Steps

1. Download the fillable PDF, or print the matrix to complete by hand. As a best practice, keep the template in a digital format to avoid outdated paper copies that may have inaccurate food allergen information.
2. The top of the matrix lists Health Canada’s priority food allergens. In the respective column, put a “C” for any menu items that CONTAIN the priority food allergens, and “M” for any menu items that MAY CONTAIN priority food allergens, or as noted in the precautionary allergen labelling statement.
3. Sign and date the matrix.
4. Review regularly, and update the matrix to reflect recipe changes, ingredient substitutions, or any other time there are changes to the recipe or supplier statements.

Note: It is recommended to assign responsibility to designated employees to oversee the review and update of the matrix and ensure the accuracy of its information.

Always check ingredients

The below resource can be used to check ingredients and provide accurate allergen information when serving a food allergic guest.

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Standard recipe template

Recipe name: _____
Yield: _____ Portion size: _____ Servings: _____
Completed by: _____ Date: _____

For more tools and resources, visit ThinkFoodAllergy.ca

Food Allergy Canada

Ingredients	Brand	Amounts		Priority food allergens in the ingredients	Priority food allergens in the "May contain" statements
		Quantity	Units		

Steps/Process

Step 1: _____
Step 2: _____
Step 3: _____
Step 4: _____
Step 5: _____
Step 6: _____
Step 7: _____
Step 8: _____

Summary of priority food allergens in this recipe
If applicable, tick the "Contains" box if the ingredient is present in the recipe. Tick the "May contain" box if the ingredient does "May contain".

Custard <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Milk <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Egg <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Wheat <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Almonds <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Peanut <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain
Nuts <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Mustard <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Wheat <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Bread nuts <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Pine nuts <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Peas <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain
Egg <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Peanut <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Triticale <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Cashews <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Mustards <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Wheat <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain
Fish <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Seam <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Triticale <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Mustards <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Wheat <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain	Peas <input type="checkbox"/> Contains <input type="checkbox"/> May contain

*This template must be reviewed and updated regularly, including for any recipe changes, ingredient substitutions, or any other time there are changes to the recipe or supplier statements.

Standard recipe template

A fillable PDF that lists the recipes of the standardized menu items.

How can it be used?

To easily reference ingredient and priority food allergen information for standardized menu items.

This template requires an update for any ingredient changes. It does not replace the need for staff communication to confirm that there have been no changes or substitutions to the ingredients.

Steps

1. Download the fillable PDF, or print the template to complete by hand. As a best practice, keep the template in a digital format to avoid outdated paper copies that may have inaccurate food allergen information.
2. List any priority food allergens that are present as ingredients or listed in the "Contains" statement on any bulk ingredient food labels.
3. List any priority food allergens mentioned in the precautionary allergen labelling statement ("May contain") on any bulk ingredient food labels (e.g., sauces, marinades, etc.).
4. List the food allergens used in the recipe.
5. Sign and date the template.
6. Review regularly, and update the template for recipe changes, ingredient substitutions, supplier changes, or any other time there are changes to the recipe or supplier statements.
7. Consider regular checks or inspections to ensure the standardized recipe is being followed properly.

Note: It is recommended to assign responsibility to designated employees to oversee the review and update of the template and ensure the accuracy of its information.

Thank you for creating an inclusive environment

Your efforts toward food allergen management help ensure a safe dining experience for millions of Canadians, along with their friends and families. Together, we can create an inclusive environment where both foodservice employees and guests can enjoy their meal experience, and dine with confidence.

Contact us

For questions on the resources or for additional support with your food allergen management efforts, please contact us at **info@foodallergycanada.ca** or at 1 866 785-5660.

Visit **ThinkFoodAllergy.ca** often as we continue to add more resources.

Food Allergy Canada is a national charity and the country's leading patient organization committed to educating, supporting, and advocating for the more than 3 million Canadians impacted by food allergy. We focus on improving daily quality of life by providing education and support needed to effectively navigate this medical condition, building informed and supportive communities, and acting as the national voice on key patient issues.



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