
Food Allergens

Background Each year, millions of Americans have allergic reactions to food. Although most food allergies cause relatively mild and minor symptoms, some food allergies can cause severe reactions, and may even be life-threatening.

There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of food allergens — and early recognition and management of allergic reactions to food — are important measures to prevent serious health consequences. Following ingestion of a food allergen(s), a person with food allergies can experience a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis.

Requirements California Retail Food Code (CalCode) section 113947 requires the “**person in charge**” and all food employees to have adequate knowledge of food safety as it relates to their assigned duties. This CalCode section recently expanded, to include knowledge about “**major food allergens**”.

Training for employees may be accomplished, among other methods, using a poster or job aid to which the employee can refer.

Major Food Allergens

CalCode section 113820.5 defines “**major food allergens**” as:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Fish, including, but not limited to, bass, flounder, and cod
- Crustacean shellfish, including, but not limited to, crab, lobster, and shrimp
- Tree nuts, including, but not limited to, almonds, pecans, and walnuts
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Soybeans
- A food ingredient that contains protein derived from any of the above listed foods

“**Major food allergen**” does not include either of the following:

- A highly refined oil derived from the foods specified above and any ingredient derived from that highly refined oil e.g. peanut oil
- An ingredient that is exempt under the petition or notification process specified in the federal Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-282).

Food Allergy Symptoms

Onset of symptoms may occur within a few minutes or up to two hours after a person has consumed a food that they are allergic to. Symptoms may include:

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



Questions

For more information on food safety, please contact Merced County Environmental Health Division at (209) 381-1100, or visit <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm079311.htm>
