SECTION 6

Managing Food Allergies



Managing allergies in the ECEC setting

Allergies are common in Australia – it is estimated that around one in ten babies and one in twenty school aged children has a medically confirmed food allergy, and other children may have allergies to insect stings and medications.

While most children have allergies to the common allergy causing foods (cow's milk/dairy, soy, egg, wheat, fish, shellfish, peanut, tree nuts and sesame), it is possible to be allergic to any food, including fruits and vegetables. The only way to manage a food allergy is for the child to completely avoid the food they are allergic to. Even a crumb or drop of food, or a sip of a drink can cause an allergic reaction.

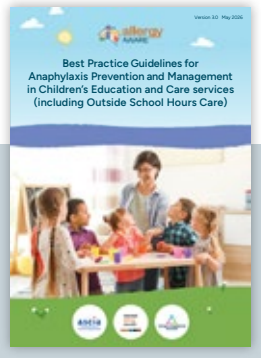
To help care for children and young people with allergies, the National Allergy Council have published *Best Practice Guidelines for Anaphylaxis Prevention and Management for Children's Education and Care (CEC) (including Outside School Hours Care)*.

The Best Practice Guidelines:

- Outline the **key principles** and recommendations for reducing the risk of anaphylaxis in early childhood education and care settings and outside school hours care services.
- A set of **resources** including templates and sample documents are available as free downloads from the National Allergy Council's website:
  - Allergy Aware
- An **implementation guide** supports services to put the recommendations into place.

FIGURE 3: *Key principles for reducing the risk of anaphylaxis in children's education and care*

- Implement an allergy aware approach to preventing and managing anaphylaxis.
- Have an anaphylaxis management policy. Review this policy and associated procedures if an allergic reaction occurs.
- Obtain up-to-date medical information and develop individualised anaphylaxis care plans for each child at risk of anaphylaxis. These plans will include a copy of the child's ASCIA Action Plan.
- Educate and train staff in the prevention, recognition and treatment of allergic reactions including anaphylaxis. Educate and train staff who prepare, serve or supervise meals, in food allergen management.
- Ensure staff know which children are at risk of allergic reactions and understand that unexpected allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, might occur for the first time in children not previously known to have allergy.
- Provide age-appropriate education of children to help raise awareness and manage anaphylaxis risk in CEC services.
- Implement reasonable and effective strategies to reduce the risk of accidental exposure to known allergic triggers and review anaphylaxis risk minimisation strategies if an allergic reaction occurs.
- Have at least one general use adrenaline device in each CEC service.
- Communicate about anaphylaxis management with CEC staff and the CEC community.
- Offer support (including counselling) for CEC staff who manage an anaphylaxis.
- Appropriate reporting if an allergic reaction occurs while the child is in the care of the CEC service.



Best Practice Guidelines for Anaphylaxis Prevention and Management for Children's Education and Care (CEC) (including Outside School Hours Care)

Food allergen management across mealtime approaches

For all mealtime approaches, follow best practice in food allergen management recommended by the National Allergy Council:

Staff knowledge and records

- All staff providing food and supervising mealtimes should have completed the All about Allergens for CEC online food allergen management training within the last two years.
- Know which children have food allergies and the days they attend your service.
- Have an up-to-date food allergy and special dietary needs record for each child.
- Use a daily attendance sheet to know which meals and snacks need to be changed for children with food allergies.

Food preparation and delivery

- Ensure processes are in place to ensure the right food and drink is given to the right child. This includes systems that begin in the kitchen.
- When meals are delivered to the eating space, allergy meals should be handed to the educator (using a meal sign-off form for allergies and special dietary needs).
- Serve children with food allergies first.
- Two staff should then identify the child with allergies and double-check that the right food or drink are given to the right child.

During the meal

- Children should always be supervised when eating to ensure they do not come into contact with food allergens from other children's meals.
- All children should wash their hands BEFORE and AFTER eating to reduce allergy risk.
- The eating environment (table/chairs/cutlery) should be cleaned & checked before meals. Spills should be cleaned up quickly.
- Use of common platters / shared bowls or buffet style dining (where children serve themselves) is not recommended for children with food allergies unless all foods are suitable for each child with food allergies.

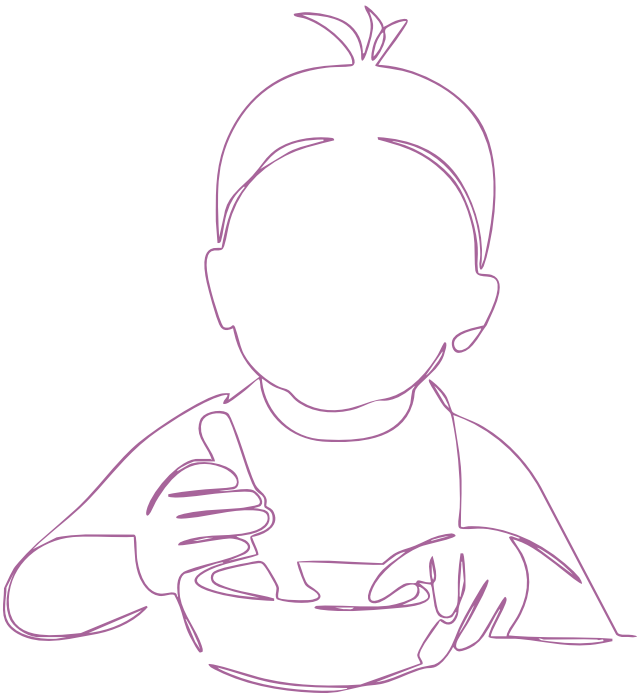
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All about Allergens. Managing Food Allergies in Children's Education and Care Kitchen Handbook

Reflective questions

Service leadership team

- *What is your continuous improvement approach to managing food safety during mealtimes?*
- *How do you ensure casual staff's knowledge of your service's food safety practices?*



All About Allergens for ECEC online training and support resources

Allergy Aware website

Allergy Aware website

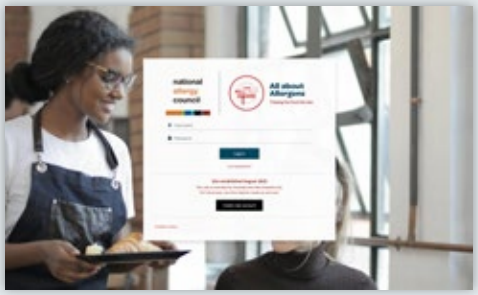
The Allergy Aware website is a resource hub that includes links to evidence-based resources and training for education and care services to help manage anaphylaxis. The website also contains links to state and territory specific information and resources. Note that the Allergy Aware website is separate from the All About Allergens Resource Hub which provides free training about managing food allergies when providing food. Further details on the All about Allergens Resource Hub can be found in the upcoming pages.



All About Allergens for CEC online training

All about Allergens for CEC

It is recommended that all staff involved in planning, ordering, making, serving and supervising meals complete the National Allergy Council's free All about Allergens for CEC food allergen management online training.



All About Allergens Kitchen Handbook

All about Allergens Kitchen Handbook

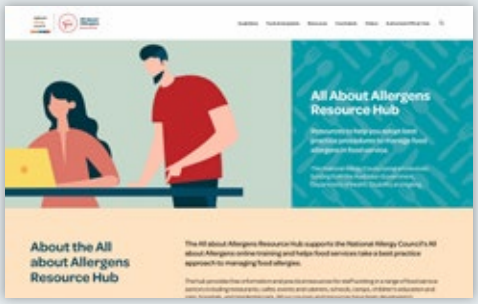
The National Allergy Council's All about Allergens Kitchen Handbook is the companion to the All about Allergens training. The Kitchen Handbook clearly outlines considerations when planning, ordering, making, serving and supervising meals for children with food allergies in Early Education and Care settings.



All about Allergens Resource Hub

All about Allergens Resource Hub

The All about Allergens Resource Hub supports the National Allergy Council's All about Allergens online training and helps food services take a best practice approach to managing food allergies. The hub provides free information and practical resources for staff working in a range of food service sectors including children's education and care.



Managing food allergies in ECEC settings is everyone's responsibility

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Everyone plays a role and needs to communicate about food allergies.

Service Manager

- Make sure all staff are aware of the risk of food allergies. This includes managers, educators, cooks, chefs and other kitchen staff.
- Make sure that only staff who are trained in food allergen management plan, order, make, serve and supervise children eating the food.
- Make sure you have a food allergy policy, and procedures for food allergen management. Audit your service to make sure the policy and procedures are followed.



Parent/Carer

When they enrol, ask parents about their child's allergies and any other dietary needs.

Parents should:

- Tell the service if their child's allergies change.
- Provide a copy of their child's ASCIA Action Plan and allergy medication.



Educator

- Know how to recognise and respond to allergic reactions.
- Know how to provide a safe environment for children with food allergies during meal and snack times.
- Plan safe and inclusive activities for children with food allergy.



Cook/Chef

- Know how to make and serve suitable food for children with food allergies.
- Know what is in the food they make and serve.
- Know which children in their childcare service have food allergies.
- Be able to answer questions from parents of children with food allergies about the ingredients of the food they make and serve. Other CEC staff should know how to find this information if they are asked for it.



All food allergies must be taken seriously

Use the same approach for all types of food allergies, regardless of the type of ASCIA Action Plan they have.

Parents should not be asked to sign disclaimers or waivers about possible exposure to food allergens while their child is at a CEC service.

Poster supplied with permission from the National Allergy Council All about Allergens Kitchen Handbook.