SECTION 6

Supporting Families of Children with Food Allergies



Managing allergies in the ECEC setting

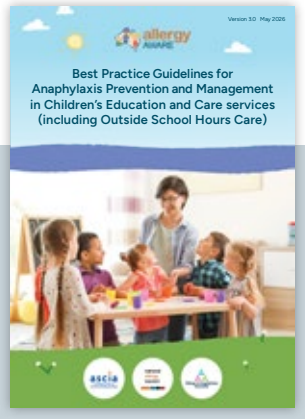
Allergies are common in Australia – it is estimated that around one in ten babies and one in twenty school aged children has a medically confirmed food allergy, and other children may have allergies to insect stings and medications.

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.



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

FIGURE 2: *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.

An allergy aware approach

Allergy aware ECEC services support staff as they work with families to reduce the risk of a child with food allergies having an allergic reaction. Children should not miss out on activities because of their food allergy – instead, plan ahead so that activities do not expose them to the food they are allergic to.

The information below provides practical guidance on how to be allergy aware.

Documentation

- When they enrol, ask families about their child's allergies and any other dietary needs. Document this in the child's individual anaphylaxis care plan along with a copy of the child's Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) Action plan.
- Know which children with food allergies will be present at the CEC service on the day you are planning activities.

Training

- All staff who supervise children with food allergies should complete the ASCIA anaphylaxis e-training, so they know how to recognise and treat an allergic reaction.
- All staff who plan, make or serve food and those who supervise children with food allergies should complete the National Allergy Council's:
  - All About Allergens for CEC free online training

Risk Reduction

- Include children with food allergy by planning games, craft activities, sensory food exploration and cooking activities that are free from the food they are allergic to.

Cooking and food exploration

- Talk to families before planning food-based activities. Substitute known food allergens with other suitable ingredients – families of children with food allergy and the allergy trained staff in your kitchen can provide advice.

Craft

- Do not use recycled items that may contain food allergens for craft (such as empty plastic milk bottles, egg cartons, cereal boxes, empty peanut and tree nut butter jars, ice cream containers).
- Avoid activities that use nut husks or shells, eggshells and dried pasta.
- Products such as play dough contain food allergens such as wheat or nut oils. Consider making wheat free play dough using wheat free flour. Clean play dough tools very well before and after use.
- Activities that include skin contact (such as face painting or making masks moulded to a child's face) should be discussed for suitability with families before the activity.

Special events

Special events that involve food are high risk for children with food allergy. The National Allergy Council:

- Anaphylaxis checklist for CEC: Preparing for off-site activities (events, excursions, sporting activities)

has been designed to help develop risk management plans with risk minimisation strategies specific to anaphylaxis for off-site activities.

- Consider children with food allergy when planning excursions, fundraisers, cultural days or stalls, breakfast mornings, picnics and other celebrations involving food.
- Children with food allergy can participate in birthday celebrations if their families supply foods that are appropriate for their child's food allergies. Examples include cupcakes that may be stored frozen in a sealed container labelled with the child's first and last name and their allergy.
- Children with food allergy should not consume any food brought in by other children or their families even if they are thought to be safe.

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Reflective questions

- *How do we work collaboratively with families to develop a shared understanding of each child's food allergy, individual needs, and strategies to support their safety, inclusion and wellbeing?*
- *To what extent do our mealtime and food-related practices support children with food allergies to participate fully and feel included, rather than different or excluded from their peers?*
- *How do we respond when family preferences, cultural practices or food traditions intersect with allergy management requirements?*
- *What evidence do we have that all educators are confident and competent in implementing allergy management procedures and responding to allergic reactions?*

All About Allergens for ECEC online training and support resources

Allergy Aware website

Allergy Aware website

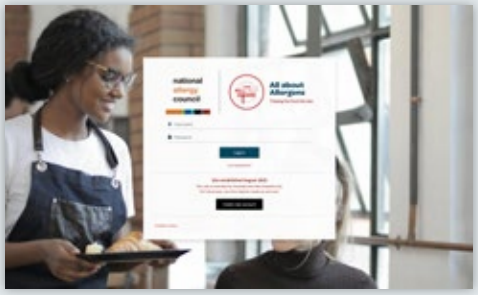
The Allergy Aware website is a resource hub that includes links to evidence-based resources and training for education and care services to help manage anaphylaxis. The website also contains links to state and territory specific information and resources. Note that the Allergy Aware website is separate 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

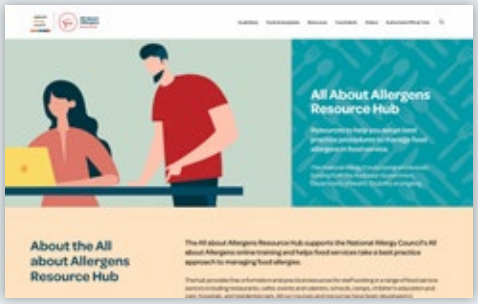
The National Allergy Council's All about Allergens Kitchen Handbook is the companion to the All about Allergens training. The Kitchen Handbook clearly outlines considerations when planning, ordering, making, serving and supervising meals for children with food allergies in Early Education and Care settings.



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.



Reducing the risk of allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis) in Children's Education and Care services

Reducing the risk of allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis) in Children's Education and Care

The Reducing the risk of allergic reactions (including anaphylaxis) in Children's Education and Care booklet provides ECEC services with examples of strategies to help reduce the risk of exposure to known allergens. This webpage also includes case studies showing how ECEC services can develop inclusive food and cooking experiences.



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.