

Allergies and avoiding cross contamination

Cooking for family is a daily task that is fun and can bring the family together. But when you are cooking for someone with food allergies, it becomes a little trickier. This is the same for eating out when you have an allergy. Knowing how to manage cross contamination risk and taking the necessary precautions is essential for your health.

Cross contamination is the name given when one food comes into contact with another food, resulting in their proteins (what your body reacts to in an allergic reaction) mixing. For example, using a barbeque to first fry eggs, before moving on to cook bacon and only wiping down the barbeque with a wet cloth in between. This type of cleaning is not good enough to completely remove all trace amounts of egg left on the barbeque, which means that trace amounts of egg may get onto the bacon. If a person who is allergic to eggs then eats this bacon, they will have the same allergic reaction as if they had eaten the egg.

Possible sources of cross contamination with foods

During food processing:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared manufacturing and packaging lines • When food is transported • When food is stored
During point of purchase:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food sold in bulk cases where shared utensils are used to hand out (e.g. bay-maries) • Deli foods
During food preparation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared use of any equipment/machinery without proper cleaning (e.g. knives, blenders, cutting boards, frying pans, barbeques, deep fryers etc) • Food service (kitchen/waiter) staff not changing gloves when preparing an allergen-free meal
Due to where foods are placed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When different foods are stored near each other there is a higher risk of cross contamination/mixing (e.g. buffets, juice bars, pick'n'mix shops).

At home

For most people living in a home with an allergic person, it is often easiest to completely remove the allergen from the house to avoid any accidental eating (especially in children) or cross contamination. This may not always be possible, so it is important to make sure

everyone in the house knows how to avoid cross contamination. This includes proper cleaning, storage and cooking.

Proper cleaning

Proper cleaning is an important part of avoiding cross contamination. Even a tiny amount of the food on a spoon or spatula that is invisible to us can cause an allergic reaction for some people.

- Make sure everyone in the house washes their hands before and after eating with soap and warm running water. Washing hands with just water and/or hand sanitiser is not enough to remove all tiny amounts of allergens from your hands.
- Use utensils and pans that have been thoroughly washed with dishwashing soap and hot water when preparing allergen-free meals.
- Make sure all counter-tops have been cleaned with common household cleaning products or watered-down bleach. Cleaning counter tops with just water or with dishwashing liquid may not be enough to remove all small amounts of the allergen.

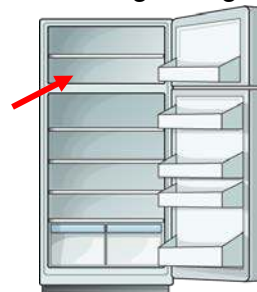
General steps for managing cross contamination at home

- Make sure everyone in the household knows how to read food labels correctly. This helps with identifying which foods contain allergens

Nutrition Information		
Servings per package: 1		
Serving size: 35g		
	Per Serve	Per 100g
Energy	501kJ	1430kJ
Protein	3.5g	10g
Fat	0.4g	1
Saturated	0.2g	0.5g
Carbohydrates		
Total	25.3g	72.2g
Sugar	7.5g	21.5g
Fibre	3.4g	9.7g
Sodium	185mg	535mg

Ingredients: Cereals (44% (wheat flour, oatmeal, maize flour), sugar, wheat gluten, molasses, salt, barley malt extract, minerals (calcium carbonate, iron), mineral salt (sodium bicarbonate), natural colour (paprika, turmeric), vitamins (vitamin C, niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B5, folate).
Contains gluten containing cereals.
May contain traces of peanuts and/or tree nuts.

- Cook allergen-free meals first where possible
- Use separate areas in the kitchen to make allergen-containing and allergen-free meals
- Use separate utensils/appliances, especially when the risk of cross contamination is high (e.g. toasters for people with wheat allergies)
- Store allergen-containing foods away from allergen-free foods (separate shelves, separate cupboards). When storing allergen foods in the fridge, be



sure to store them below and away from allergen-free foods to avoid accidental touching or dripping.

- The smell from food cannot cause an allergic reaction, but when cooking, some food specs may go into the air for a short time (e.g. beating a cake

mix which has flour). This can cause someone to breathe in the allergen, or the allergen may settle onto other foods or surfaces, which could later be eaten. Because of this, it may be best for people with allergies to avoid the kitchen during cooking times.

- Always cover pots/pans with lids where possible to avoid cross contamination from splatter
- For commonly shared condiments, it is recommended to buy separate ones for allergic people. An example of this is having separate jam jars because the risk of accidentally transferring breadcrumbs or butter to the jam is



quite high. This may be especially important if you have young children who might not remember the importance of allergen avoidance.

Dining out

Eating out is fun and can be a big part of our lives. With careful planning, you can eat out with friends and family regularly.

The following tips can help you to best manage your allergy and enjoy eating out.

- Advanced preparation and communication is necessary when eating out, at a friend's house or travelling etc. It is important to call the restaurant or café and speak to the manager before arriving to check that they can provide you with safe food, even if you have eaten there before. This is important because recipes, ways of cooking or staff can change.
- Be assertive – don't be afraid to ask all the necessary questions about their menu items or their allergy management processes. Some questions include:
 - Do you have an allergy management process in place?
 - Do you use a separate area to prepare the allergen-free meals?
 - Do you use shared grills and fryers when making regular meals and allergen-free meals?
 - Who will be preparing and plating the meals? How will the meals be brought out (e.g. balanced with several other plates, or separately)?
- As you arrive, tell the wait staff and manager again about your allergy. Some people may not understand the importance of 100% avoidance and may need your help to understand

this. Check what the restaurant's guidelines are for cooking allergen-free meals (they should have guidelines that they follow).

- Do not use restaurants or facilities which use shared serving areas with a high risk of accidental mixing and cross contamination. This includes buffets, salad bars and delis.
- Some people may require an Epi-pen (a needle of adrenaline) to treat severe reactions to food allergies (e.g. throat swelling or 'anaphylaxis'). Your doctor will be able to tell you if you need this. If you do not have your prescribed Epi-pen with you, do not eat! It is far better to be safe than to risk accidentally eating your allergen and not have your Epi-pen available for the emergency.
- Choosing simple foods (e.g. meat with vegetables and no sauce) can often be easier to help with avoiding allergens
- Do not share knives, forks or glasses with other people at your table.
- Do not try other people's meals even if you think it is safe. Restaurants may be able to say they are allergen-safe, but are unlikely to be able to guarantee their meals are 100% allergen-free. Allergen-safe means

that all precautions are taken to avoid cross contamination, however there is no fail-safe way to completely stop an allergen from accidentally coming into the kitchen, especially when the allergen food may be used for other meals. This is why it is essential for you to have your Epi-pen with you at all times.

High risk foods and places to avoid if you have an allergy

- For fish/shellfish allergies – avoid seafood restaurants due to risk of cross contamination. 'Surimi' is a name used for minced fish, which may also contain eggs.
- Fried foods – shared cooking oil may be used to cook different foods, including fish, seafood, egg and wheat. Crumbed and battered foods may use dairy and eggs; this can also transfer to the oil during frying.
- For egg and milk allergies – often crumbed and battered foods will use egg and dairy. Creamy sauces, hamburger and meatballs may also contain these ingredients.
- For tree nut and peanut allergies – these foods are often used in Asian style and vegetarian foods; it may be easiest to avoid these meals when



dining out. Salad dressings and garnishes, hamburgers, meatballs and desserts (including pastries) may also contain tree nuts and/or peanuts.

- For sesame allergies – Middle Eastern dishes and baked goods often use sesame as an ingredient.

Where can I go for further information?

1. **ASCIA** (The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy): is the peak professional body of allergy and clinical immunology specialists in Australia and New Zealand. They have lots of resources available on their website to help with living with an allergy. See their website (www.allergy.org.au/) for further details.

2. **Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**

(A&AA): is an Australian organisation that aims to improve awareness of allergies through education and research. They assist with managing allergies for individuals, families, schools, workplaces, the government and food industries in Australia. Check out their website

(www.allergyfacts.org.au) for further information and to become a member of A&AA.

3. **FSANZ** (Food Standards Australia and New Zealand): is a bi-national government agency who develop codes and standards for foods, including labelling, food safety and additives - www.foodstandards.gov.au

For further information contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist: _____