



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**”.

Calcode section 113947(b) The person in charge shall comply with **both** of the following:

- (1) Have adequate knowledge of major food allergens, food identified as major food allergens, and the symptoms that a major food allergen could cause in a sensitive individual who has an allergic reaction.
- (2) Educate the employees at the food facility regarding the information described in paragraph (1), which the person in charge may elect to accomplish by, among other methods, using a poster or job aid to which the employee can refer.

Calcode section 113947(c) “Person in charge” means a designated person who has knowledge of safe food handling practices and the major food allergens as they relate to the specific food preparation activities that occur at the food facility.

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 Allergens (Continued)

“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).
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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



Milk



Egg



Shellfish



Fish



Tree Nuts



Wheat



Peanut



Soybean

Questions

For more information on food safety, please contact the Department of Environmental Health at (408) 918-3400 or visit www.EHinfo.org/CPD.

And <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm079311.htm>
