

Adult Day Care Food Allergy Fact Sheet



Common Questions: Adult Day Care Staff

What are ways adult day care staff can help prevent an allergic reaction?

The best method for preventing an allergic reaction is to avoid exposure to the allergen. Reading ingredient statements on food labels for allergens, avoiding cross-contact, following recommendations for that participant, and following food allergy policies are essential in preventing allergic reactions. It is important to learn about food allergies, such as the symptoms and what to do in an emergency, so staff is prepared.



What should be done if an error is made when preparing food/beverage for a participant with a food allergy?

If an error is made, do not serve the food/beverage to the participant with the food allergy. Notify the supervisor or manager as quickly as possible. If they are not available, notify the administrative office or whoever is outlined in the site's food allergy policies. Serve an appropriate replacement meal to the participant. If the allergen containing food has been consumed by the participant with a food allergy, take appropriate measures according to the participant's food allergy management plan.

What should be done if a participant with a food allergy complains of symptoms but looks fine?

Take all complaints from a participant with food allergies seriously. Notify the nurse or administrative office immediately. Follow the sponsor's designated process or policy on handling an allergic reaction if available, and take appropriate measures according to the participant's food allergy management plan.

How can the staff be prepared if a participant has a severe allergic reaction?

Attend any food allergy training that is offered and know the symptoms of a severe allergic reaction. New staff should be trained on food allergies. Refer to ICN's *Adult Day Care Food Allergy Fact Sheet – Overview of Food Allergies* to learn more information about food allergy symptoms.

Be familiar with the food allergy action plan of each participant with food allergies. The Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) organization provides the *Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan*, which can be used by adult day care sites, along with the participant, family, caregiver, and a State licensed healthcare professional, to create an emergency care plan for a participant. A State licensed healthcare professional is an individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law. This plan is signed by the healthcare professional and includes emergency contact information, allergen(s), symptoms, and



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treatment instructions in an easy-to-follow format, which is critical in a food allergy emergency. Copies of the *FARE Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan* in both English and Spanish can be downloaded from the FARE website (<https://www.foodallergy.org/living-food-allergies/food-allergy-essentials/food-allergy-anaphylaxis-emergency-care-plan>).

Can exposure to a very small amount of allergen cause a reaction?

Yes. Even a very small amount of an allergen has the potential to cause severe allergic reactions.

What is cross-contact?

Cross-contact is the accidental transfer of a food allergen to a food or surface that previously did not contain that allergen. Many people confuse cross-contact and cross-contamination. The terms are often used interchangeably; however, they should not be as they have different meanings. The following chart shows the difference between the two terms.



Cross-Contact	Cross-Contamination
Definition: Accidental transfer of allergens to a food or surface	Definition: Accidental transfer of microorganisms to a food or surface
Cooking does not reduce or eliminate the allergen protein.	Cooking does reduce or eliminate the microorganism.
Removed from a surface by soap, water, and friction only	Removed from a surface by washing, rinsing, and sanitizing
Example: A knife is used to spread peanut butter for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Then, the same knife is used to cut a turkey sandwich without cleaning, rinsing, and sanitizing the knife between uses.	Example: Raw meat is cut on a cutting board. Then, fresh vegetables for the salad bar are chopped on the same cutting board without cleaning, rinsing, and sanitizing the board between uses.

Are potholders and oven mitts sources of cross-contact?

Yes. Use only dedicated potholders and oven mitts when making allergen-free food items. Wash hands before and after using potholders and oven mitts.

Can hand sanitizer remove allergens from hands?

No. The only effective way to remove allergens is by properly washing your hands for 20 seconds. Soap, friction, running water, and drying hands remove the allergens from hands. For more information about handwashing, visit www.theicn.org/foodsafety and refer to ICN's *How to Properly Wash Your Hands* poster.



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References

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<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

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