

FA/01: Food allergy and anaphylaxis

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Tree-nut and peanut allergy are frequently severe and for that reason has received widespread publicity. Minute amounts of nuts and peanuts can cause allergic reactions.
- 1.2 When deciding whether a food is safe or not for a predisposed person, the information a business provides to its customers, including food labels, menu descriptions and information provided by service staff, must be considered.
- 1.3 Almost any food can cause an allergic reaction; however there are certain foods that are responsible for the majority of food allergies.
- 1.4 Approximately 10 people die each year as a direct result of a food allergy

2.0 What is food allergy?

- 2.1 *A food allergen*; is a food or ingredient which can cause an allergic reaction in predisposed persons.
- 2.2 *An allergic reaction* is a “response from the body’s immune system when it mistakenly treats proteins found in a specific food as a threat which is not necessarily harmful in itself, but results in a reaction that causes symptoms and disease in a predisposed person, which in turn can cause inconvenience, or a great deal of misery”.
- 2.3 *Anaphylaxis* is a severe allergic reaction, that being the extreme end of the allergic spectrum. The whole body is affected, very often within minutes of exposure to a food allergen but can sometimes it may take hours.

3.0 Common symptoms of allergic reaction

- 3.1 Any or all of the following listed symptoms may manifest themselves during an allergic reaction:
 - generalised flushing of the skin, rash, itching or hives;
 - swelling of the throat and tongue;
 - difficulty in swallowing or speaking;
 - difficulty in breathing due to severe asthma;
 - abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting;
 - onset of weakness/faint (drop in blood pressure);
 - sense of impending doom; and/or
 - collapse and unconsciousness.

4.0 Emergency action

- 4.1 If a person has an allergic reaction and becomes ill, it may be likely that person or someone with them will state that they are suffering an allergic reaction. They may use the *word ‘anaphylaxis’* (pronounced Ana-fill-axis).
- 4.2 Immediately ask someone to ring 22222 (024765) stating that you believe a person is suffering from *‘anaphylaxis’*.

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- 4.3 If the ambulance has not arrived and the patient is becoming unwell ask customers if there is a Doctor in the area.
- 4.4 The affected person may well have an 'Epipen' however this is designed for self-administration by that individual. It is a drug which is only safe to be used by the sufferer when they can recognise for themselves the symptoms of anaphylaxis. In the event that they are too ill to do this or are unconscious they will require a paramedic as soon as possible.
- 4.5 If the person is conscious place them in a position where they are comfortable and able to breathe easily until the ambulance arrives; however if they are feeling faint, they should be laid flat with their legs elevated, if possible.
- 4.6 If the person is unconscious, you should place them in the recovery position their side, supported by one leg and one arm, with the head tilted back and the chin lifted.
- 4.7 Please note that severe reactions can take place within a few minutes and in very extreme cases where prompt treatment is not sought - can be fatal. Immediate action is vital.

5.0 Major food allergens

- 5.1 The following list of foods and ingredients have been identified as being responsible for commonly causing allergic reaction in predisposed persons:

Tree nuts	Peanuts (legume)	Cereal (gluten)	Fish (all species)
Crustaceans (shellfish)	Molluscs	Egg (all varieties)	Milk
Soya	Sesame	Celery & celeriac	Mustard
Lupin	Sulphur dioxide & sulphites		

- 5.2 It is also widely recognised that certain people may show an allergic reaction to ingredients other than those listed above. It is important to realise that the afore-mentioned list is by no means exclusive. Refer to **FA/02: Common food allergens**

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