



Allergy & Anaphylaxis  
Australia



POTENTIALLY **LIFE**  
**THREAT**  
**ENING**



Food  
Authority

**BE PREPARED. BE ALLERGY AWARE.**



**1 IN 10**

INFANTS WHO ARE LESS THAN ONE YEAR OF AGE WILL DEVELOP A FOOD ALLERGY

# FOOD ALLERGY IS A GROWING PROBLEM

APPROXIMATELY **1 IN 10** AUSTRALIAN INFANTS WHO ARE LESS THAN ONE YEAR OF AGE WILL DEVELOP A FOOD ALLERGY.\*

FOR THE CONSUMER WITH FOOD ALLERGY THERE IS **NO SAFE LIMIT** FOR THE ALLERGENS THAT THEY ARE SENSITISED TO.

FOOD ALLERGY IS ESTIMATED TO AFFECT AROUND **1 IN 20 CHILDREN** (UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE) AND ABOUT **2 IN 100 ADULTS** IN AUSTRALIA\*

THE ONLY WAY TO MANAGE A FOOD ALLERGY IS **AVOIDANCE** OF ALL FOODS CONTAINING THE ALLERGEN

THE MOST SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTION IS KNOWN AS **ANAPHYLAXIS**. ANAPHYLAXIS IS POTENTIALLY LIFE THREATENING

WITH KNOWLEDGE AND ORGANISATION ALLERGIC REACTIONS INCLUDING **DEATHS CAN BE AVOIDED**

ANAPHYLAXIS CAUSED BY FOOD HAS **DOUBLED** IN THE LAST 10 YEARS\*

THE LAW REQUIRES YOU TO PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION WHEN A CUSTOMER ASKS ABOUT **ALLERGENS** IN FOODS YOU ARE SERVING.

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS FOR ANAPHYLAXIS HAVE INCREASED **5-FOLD** IN THE LAST 20 YEARS\*\*

MOST FATALITIES RELATING TO A FOOD ALLERGY OCCURRED WHEN EATING **OUTSIDE THE HOME**\*\*\*

THERE IS CURRENTLY **NO CURE** FOR FOOD ALLERGY

BOTH THE CUSTOMER & THE FOOD SERVICE BUSINESS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY IN **PREVENTING** AN ALLERGIC REACTION.



\*Source: © ASCIA 2014. Allergy in Australia 2014: A submission for allergic diseases to be recognised as a National Health Priority Area

\*\*Source: Mullins JACI 2015 (in press): actual data is 3.6/100,000 in 1993/4 to 17.7 in 2011/12. Mullins RJ, Dear KBG, Tang ML. Time trends in Australian hospital anaphylaxis admissions 1998/9 to 2011/12. J Allergy Clin Immunol; 2015

\*\*\*Source: Clinical & Experimental Allergy, 46, 1099-1110 © 2016 John Wiley & Sons Ltd Increases in anaphylaxis fatalities in Australia from 1997 to 2013 R. J. Mullins1,2,

# THE USUAL SUSPECTS



## FOOD ALLERGY IS A SERIOUS ISSUE

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

TAKE CUSTOMER REQUESTS ABOUT ALLERGIES SERIOUSLY.

EVERYONE – FROM THE MANAGER THROUGH TO THE FOOD PREPARATION AND FOOD SERVICE STAFF – NEED TO BE AWARE OF THE RISKS FOOD ALLERGIES POSE, AND THE NEED TO BE CLEAR ON HOW TO IDENTIFY AND MANAGE THEM.

### WHAT IS A FOOD ALLERGY?

A food allergy is an immune system response to a food protein that the body mistakenly believes is harmful.

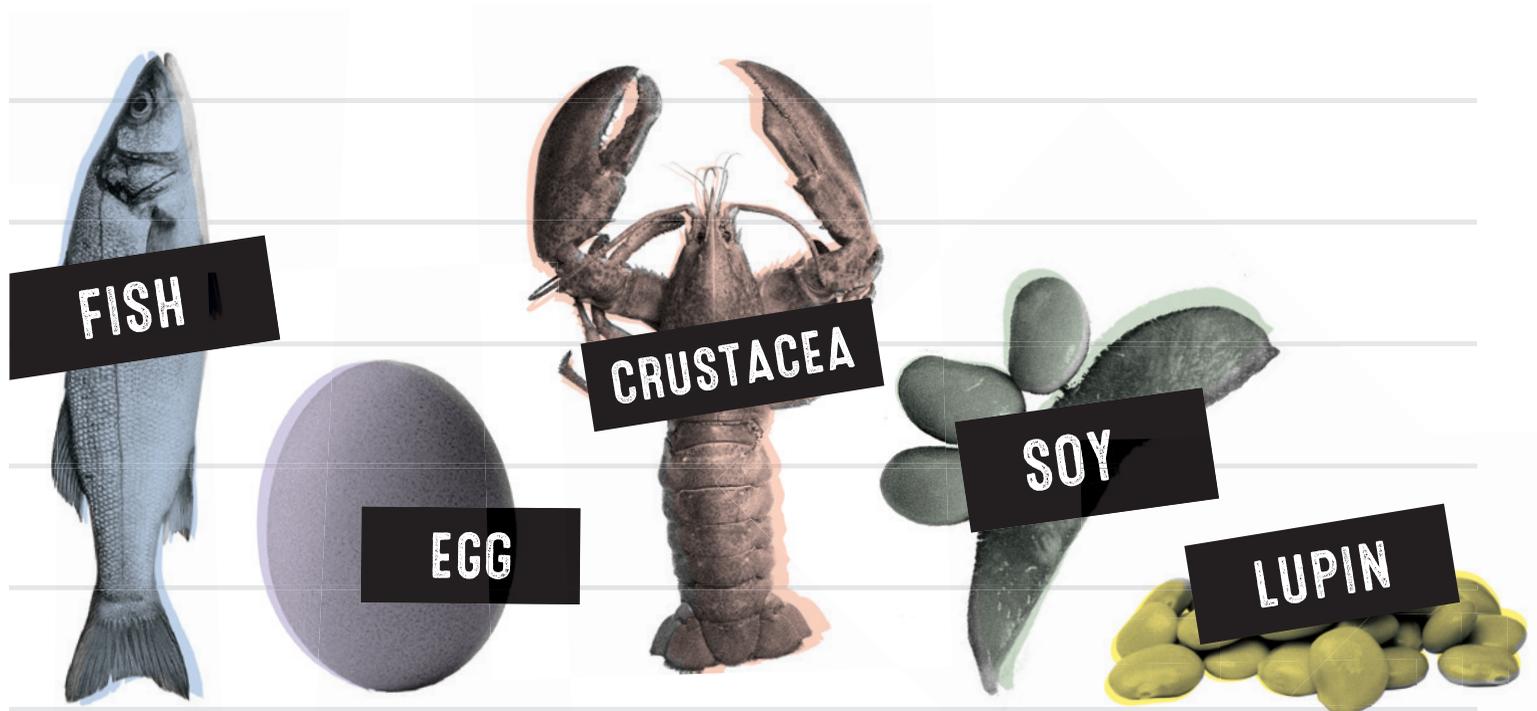
A food allergy is not the same as food intolerance. A food intolerance is the inability to properly digest or fully process certain foods. The most common intolerances include lactose, gluten, yeast and sulphite

**Food allergy:** immune system reaction to a food which can be potentially life threatening.

**Allergen:** a substance that a person's immune system thinks is harmful to the body. Allergens include foods, insects, pets, dust mites, pollens and some medicines for example.

**Food intolerance:** does not involve the immune system. It is the inability to digest a food which can cause discomfort and distress but is not life threatening.

“THE TEN FOODS BELOW  
CAUSE AROUND 90% OF FOOD  
ALLERGIC REACTIONS.”



### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The signs and symptoms of a food allergy can vary from person to person. An allergic reaction can happen very quickly after eating and suddenly become severe.

Signs and symptoms can include: hives, swelling of the lips, face and eyes, abdominal pain, vomiting, swelling of the tongue, tightness of the throat, breathing difficulty, dizziness and/or collapse. Some signs and symptoms can lead to death.

### WHAT FOODS ARE COMMON ALLERGENS?

The first ten foods listed below cause around 90% of food allergic reactions. They are:

Peanuts, tree nuts (eg almonds, cashews), eggs, cow's milk (it's common to also be allergic to milk from other animals), fish, crustacea (shellfish, e.g. prawns, lobster), sesame seeds, soybeans, cereals containing gluten and their products, namely, wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt, and lupin.

By law, manufacturers must declare all of the allergens listed above, and their products, on food labels. Sulphites in concentrations of 10mg/kg or more must also be declared on food labels of packaged foods.

Remember, the law requires you to provide accurate information when a customer asks about allergens in foods you are serving.

Note: Any food (e.g. kiwi fruit, mushroom, celery) can cause an allergic reaction in someone allergic to those foods.

**Most fatal allergic reactions are triggered by peanut, tree nuts or seafood\* however people have died as a result of cow's milk, egg, sesame and other foods.**

\*Source: Clinical & Experimental Allergy, 46, 1099-1110 © 2016 John Wiley & Sons Ltd Increases in anaphylaxis fatalities in Australia from 1997 to 2013 R. J. Mullins<sup>1,2</sup>,

# ALLERGY AWARENESS IS GOOD FOR YOUR BUSINESS

ATTENDING TO A CUSTOMER'S ALLERGY REQUESTS IS NOT DIFFICULT.  
IT'S NOT ONLY YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATION, BUT IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.  
A GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WILL HELP BUILD LOYALTY AND  
IS GOOD FOR YOUR BUSINESS

## GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

A customer calls ahead to an Italian restaurant to advise them of his milk allergy. The waitress notes his request, his food allergy and his booking time. She says she will speak with the chef and call him back if there is a problem.

When the family arrives at the restaurant, the customer tells the waitress he is the person with the milk allergy. He orders plain steamed vegetables, boiled pasta (without butter) and fish of the day.

The waitress discusses the order with the chef and returns with a packet of pasta for the customer to check. He approves the ingredients and asks for the fish to be grilled on a piece of foil to help prevent cross contamination.

The waitress tells the man the chef is cooking his food separately with clean utensils including a clean knife and cutting board. She writes **MILK ALLERGY** on his final order, hands it to the chef whilst explaining the customer's allergy.

The chef reviews the order, and thinking the meal seems a bit bland, heads to the table to ask the customer if he would like chilli sauce on the side. He accepts the offer after asking about ingredient content of the chilli sauce.

When delivering the meal, the waitress explains what the chef has done to reduce risk. When dessert is offered, the customer is told fruit is the only choice available to him.

## BAD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

BASED ON AN ACTUAL EVENT

A man with an allergy to milk attended a work function and upon arrival, disclosed his allergy to wait staff. Despite this, he was served a bowl of pasta with cheese on it.

After once again advising that he was allergic to milk and therefore could not eat the meal given to him, the bowl was taken away and he was brought, what he thought was a new meal.

However, after eating only a spoonful he went into anaphylaxis which required three doses of injected adrenaline (epinephrine) and emergency transport to hospital.

Upon further investigation, it was revealed that the original bowl of pasta with cheese was simply taken back to the kitchen and upturned into another bowl which was then brought out to him.



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**DON'T LET A LACK OF EDUCATION THREATEN A CUSTOMER'S LIFE.... OR RUIN YOUR BUSINESS!**

# ALLERGY AWARE CHECKLIST!

## 1. KNOW what is in your food

- Only accept correctly labelled foods.
- Check all ingredients even in sauces, spices, garnishes, oils, dressings etc for allergens.
- Avoid ingredient substitution.
- Be familiar with all ingredients as some may be derived from one or more of the food allergens which may not be obvious from their name.

## 2. LISTEN to your customers and be 100% truthful

- Take customer requests about allergens seriously. Listen carefully.
- Give customers accurate information about the content of meals when they ask.
- Have a specific protocol to follow if a customer says they have a food allergy.
- Place the name of known allergens next to menu items, if possible.
- Include a note on all menus asking customers to ALWAYS disclose their food allergy when ordering from the menu as allergen content is not written on the menu.

## 3. PREPARE food safely

- Always double check the ingredients with the chef.
- Handle food safely. Start fresh for meals that must be free of an allergen.
- Clean and sanitise work surfaces, utensils and other food-contact items between foods. Even very small amounts can be harmful. (e.g. 1000th of a peanut)
- Have a dedicated area for preparing allergen

free meals (be aware that food that is safe for one person with a food allergy may be unsafe for another person with food allergy).

- Place the name of known allergens next to menu items, if possible.
- Whenever possible, prepare foods for people with food allergy first.
- Have some way of identifying the meal for the person with food allergy.
- Always take the meal to the customer with a food allergy separately, not whilst carrying other meals.
- Check the allergen free meal is given to the person with the food allergy.

## 4. EDUCATE your staff

- Ensure your Food Safety Supervisor's training is up-to-date. Recertification includes 'Allergen Management' as a required unit of competency
- Train and test all staff regularly in food safety, hygiene and allergen awareness. The National Allergy Strategy ([foodallergytraining.org.au](http://foodallergytraining.org.au)) offers free 'All About Allergens' food allergy e-training for food service.
- There are many resources available from both the NSW Food Authority website ([foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)) as well as Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia ([allergyfacts.org.au](http://allergyfacts.org.au)), where you can even purchase a 'Food Allergen Kit' for Food Service which is designed specifically for the retail food service sector.
- Teach staff of their obligation to declare certain allergens.
- Ensure your staff are updated on new laws and legislation relating to allergen management.
- Display **The Usual Suspects** poster in your kitchen.

## FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Purchase Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia's 'Food Service Kit' containing a detailed booklet, posters, food allergen cards and more from [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au) or phone 1300 728 000.

### NSW Food Authority

[www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au) 1300 552 406

### Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia

[www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au) 1300 728 000

### National Allergy Strategy

FREE training for food service at [www.foodallergytraining.org.au](http://www.foodallergytraining.org.au)

Download your free copy of the Allergy Aware Checklist and The Usual Suspects poster from NSW Food Authority at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au) or phone 1300 552 406.

# COMMUNICATING ALLERGIES — IN THE — KITCHEN

**KNOW**  
WHAT'S IN YOUR FOOD

**BE 100%**  
**TRUTHFUL**

**PREPARE**  
FOOD SAFELY

**UNDERSTAND**  
THE CONSEQUENCES

Food allergens can be present in many food ingredients and are not always obvious from their name. Did you know that coconut milk often contains casein which is a milk protein? Or that depending on its source, vegetable oil may contain soy, peanut or sesame?

Downloadable allergen cards containing alternate words for allergens can be accessed at [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)

# EVERY STAFF CONTROL

## REQUIREMENTS OF THE FOOD STANDARDS CODE

**THE 10 MOST COMMON ALLERGENS  
MUST BE DECLARED ON FOOD LABELS  
OF PACKAGED FOODS:**

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts  
(eg almonds, cashews)
- Eggs
- Cow's milk  
(it's common to also be allergic to milk from other animals)
- Fish
- Crustacea  
(shellfish, e.g. prawns, lobster)
- Sesame seeds
- Soybeans
- Cereals containing gluten and their products, namely, wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt
- Lupin

Added sulphites in concentrations of 10mg/kg or more must also be declared on food labels of packaged foods.

Consumers have a legal right to receive, on request, correct written or verbal information on allergen content when buying takeaway foods or eating out.

**FOOD BUSINESSES BREACH THE CODE IF:**

- Information is not on a label or is not given by staff selling unpackaged food made at the premises when a customer asks for it.
- An allergen is found in a food that was specifically requested not to contain that allergen.

# FF MEMBER T O FOOD IBUTES T O SAFETY

## MANAGEMENT - GOOD TRAINING AND GOOD SYSTEMS ARE CRITICAL:

- Develop a process for preparing foods for customers with allergies and ensure it is followed.
- Train your staff so they understand their obligation to declare certain allergens and other substances in food if the customer asks.
- Only use ingredients that are clearly and correctly labelled.
- Ask your suppliers about their allergen management policy and for a Product Information Form (PIF).
- Keep ingredient lists of foods/ingredients you put into different containers in a specified location where all staff can access information.
- If reusing containers to store ingredients be sure to wash them with hot soapy water and relabel them before use.
- Establish clear procedures for rework (eg. when a product containing a specific allergen is mixed with a product that does not contain the ingredient, ensure the final product is clearly labelled with the allergen it now contains).
- Consider providing allergen information on your menu to help customers easily determine what foods they should avoid.
- Also include a note on menus encouraging people to **ALWAYS** disclose their allergy when ordering their food as allergen content is often not on the menu.

## FOOD PREPARATION - WHEN PREPARING A MEAL FOR SOMEONE WITH AN ALLERGY

- Advise all kitchen and service staff that a meal free of an allergen/s is being prepared.
- Avoid cross contamination at all times - from the time the food arrives at the business to when it is served to a customer.

- Store food safely in clearly labelled containers.
- Keep surfaces, utensils and hands clean.
- Do not substitute or add ingredients if you are not sure what the replacement product contains.
- Check that no high-risk garnishes have been added to the plate.
- Know your ingredients. Always read the labels
- Remember that heating and cooling food does not destroy allergens.

## FOOD SERVICE - WHEN A CUSTOMER ADVISES THEY HAVE A FOOD ALLERGY:

- Provide the customer with the information they need to make an informed choice.
- Ensure you are very clear on what food allergies they have and answer honestly. You cannot guarantee allergy free food, but you can do your best to make sure the allergen is not an ingredient of any component of the menu item chosen.
- If you are unsure of the customer's question, say so. Never guess...a wrong response could lead to a life threatening emergency.
- Write the customer's request clearly on the order docket **and also talk to the kitchen staff about it.**
- Take care that no food or liquid spills onto the allergen free meal from another plate.
- Tell the customer what you have done to reduce the risk of an allergen being present in the food item.

In the first instance, it is the customer's responsibility to advise food service staff that they have an allergy.

It is then the responsibility of food service staff to make sure the food they serve the customer does not contain that allergen.

# AVOID CROSS CONTAMINATION

CROSS CONTAMINATION OCCURS WHEN FOOD CONTAINING ALLERGENS COMES INTO CONTACT WITH FOOD THAT DOES NOT.

EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE:

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1

A food handler using the same cutting board to cut a peanut butter sandwich, and then a ham sandwich.

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2

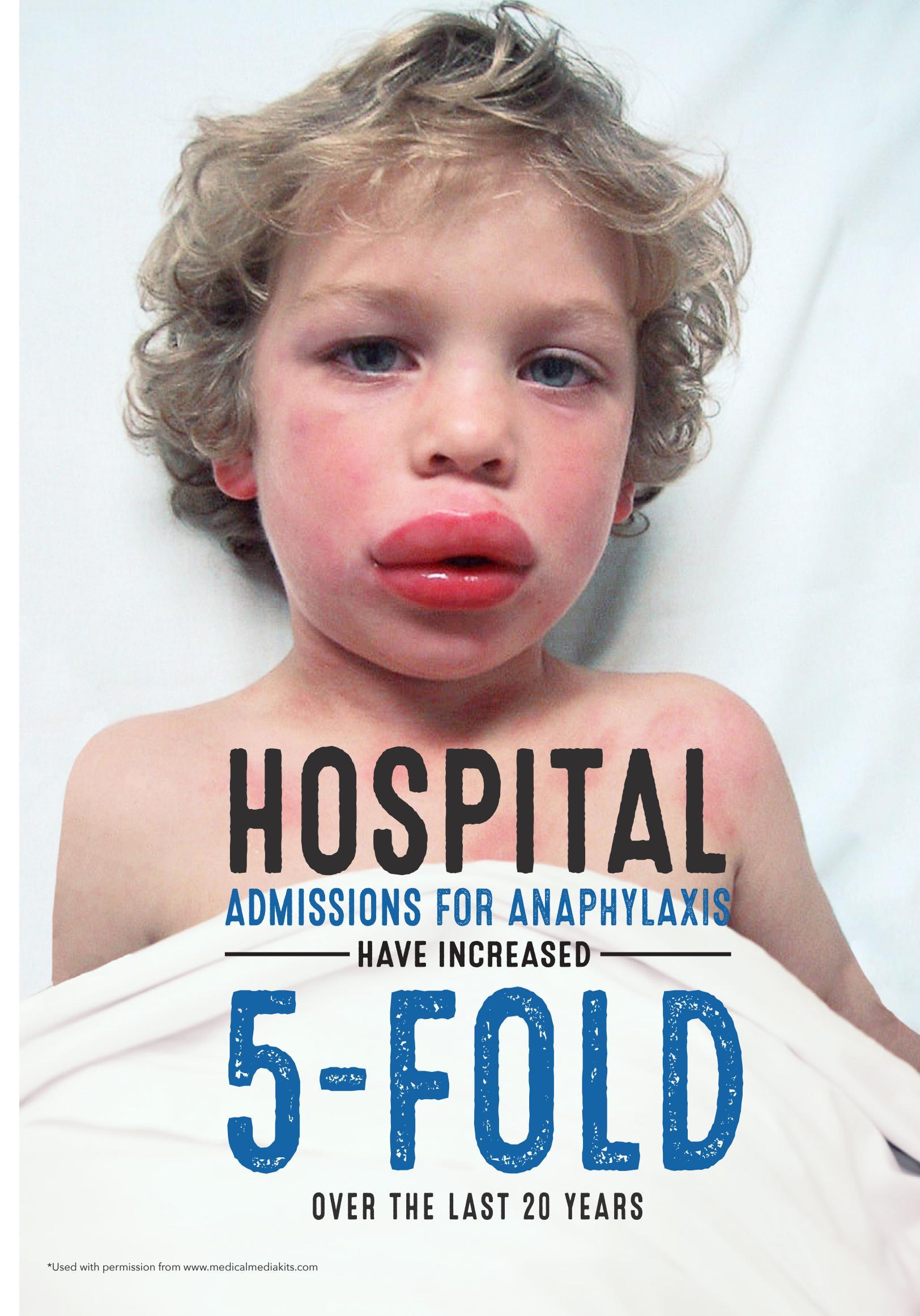
A baker making muffins that contain eggs, then using the same unwashed mixer to mix a dough without eggs.

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3

A chef preparing cooked prawns on a plate and then cutting lettuce without first washing hands thoroughly.

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**HOSPITAL**

**ADMISSIONS FOR ANAPHYLAXIS**

**HAVE INCREASED**

**5-FOLD**

**OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS**

# WHAT TO DO IF A CUSTOMER HAS AN ALLERGIC REACTION

## CALL TRIPLE ZERO

### WHILE WAITING FOR THE AMBULANCE TO ARRIVE

- 1** Lay person flat, do not allow them to stand or walk. If breathing is difficult allow to sit on the ground with legs outstretched
- 2** Follow customer's ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis (if they have one) and administer adrenaline (epinephrine) autoinjector in accordance with the instructions on the Plan.

**FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS CAN CONSIDER STORAGE OF AN ADRENALINE AUTOINJECTOR SUCH AS THE EPIPEN® IN THEIR FIRST AID KIT ALONG WITH AN ASCIA ACTION PLAN FOR ANAPHYLAXIS FOR GENERAL USE.**

This device can then be used in an emergency when an individual is showing signs of an allergic reaction as detailed on the ASCIA Action Plan stored with the device. For more information on obtaining an adrenaline autoinjector and training that is required, or to access an ASCIA Action Plan please call 1300 728 000 or go to [www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au).