

Cooking for friends with food allergies

Eating at a friend's house:

This resource can be given to friends by people with food allergies to help educate on the importance of cross-contamination management and help to make eating at a friend's house easier.

Cooking for friends is a fun way to socialise and bring everyone together. However when you are cooking for a friend with a food allergy, it becomes a little trickier. Knowing how to manage

cross-contamination risk

and taking the necessary steps is essential for the health of people with true food allergies.



What are food allergies?

A food allergy is when someone's immune system reacts to the protein in the food, thinking that it is dangerous like a parasite; this reaction causes you to develop different symptoms. Symptoms can develop within 30 minutes of coming into contact with the allergen, and can range from mild (e.g. swelling and itchy mouth, hives, vomiting, diarrhoea) to

severe (anaphylaxis). Even trace amounts of a food allergen can cause a reaction; for example, it only takes 1/1000th of a peanut to cause a reaction. As there is currently no cure for food allergies, strict 100% avoidance is essential for the management of allergies. Check out the NEMO 'Food allergies – general information and management guide' for more general information about food allergies.

What is cross contamination?

Cross contamination is the name for 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.



Eating is a big part of our lives, and being able to share this with our friends is important. It is recommended that if you have an allergy, you give your friends a copy of this resource to help them prepare safe meals for you. It is a big responsibility to prepare a meal for someone with an allergy; if you don't feel that an allergen-safe meal can be prepared in your friend's kitchen, it may be best to **bring your own meal**.

Proper cleaning

Effective cleaning is an important part of cross contamination management, as even a trace of food on a spoon or spatula that is invisible to us can cause an allergic reaction.

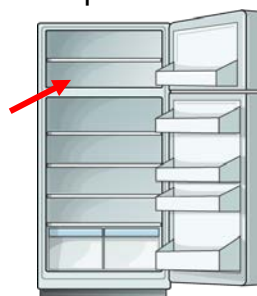
- Make sure everyone in the house washes their hands with soap and warm running water before and after eating. Washing hands with just water and/or hand sanitiser is not enough to remove all tiny amounts of allergens from your hands.
- Use utensils and pans that have been thoroughly washed with dishwashing 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.

- It is recommended to thoroughly clean down the kitchen utensils, countertops and plates, even if already cleaned. This will help with your own certainty in your cross contamination management.

General tips for managing cross contamination

- If you do not know how to read food labels to identify if a food contains a food allergen, check out the NEMO 'Label reading for food allergies' resource.
- Do not use appliances that are difficult to properly clean, because the risk of cross-contamination could be high. For example, toasters are difficult to completely clean, which means there is a high risk of cross-contamination with wheat from the breadcrumbs.
- If preparing a separate meal for the person with the allergen, it is



recommended to prepare this meal first. Cover the meal once you are finished preparing it

and take care when storing the meal (e.g. store it high in the fridge). This is to make sure that allergens can't accidentally drip onto or touch the meal.

- If cooking for several people, it may be easiest for you to prepare the same, allergen free meal for everyone. Your friend may be able to provide you with some recipe ideas, or there are several different meal ideas available online. Cooking simple dishes e.g. meat with vegetables, baked potato and no sauces can make allergy-avoidance easier.
- If using ingredients from communal jars e.g. jams/chutneys/mustards, it is



recommended to buy new ones, as the risk of cross-contamination is high (e.g. crumbs left in the jam).

- Areas that are considered high-risk for cross-contamination include inadequately cleaned baking trays, barbeques and deep fryers. Take extra caution if using these areas, following the effective cleaning methods mentioned above.

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**: 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.
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