

Allergies & Allergen Management

Food allergies can be life threatening. For people who have a food allergy the only way to manage the allergy is to avoid the food allergen. For this reason there are laws in place, for example mandatory labelling to help people who have a food allergy avoid food allergens.

Many sectors in the community also have a role in assisting in managing food allergies including the food industry, health professionals, early childhood education centres and schools.

Footscray Early Learning Centre has implemented food allergen management procedures to assist in identifying and managing allergen hazards which may arise for individual children. The procedures are implemented for foods intended to be provided as 'allergen free' and to effectively manage the risks related to food allergens for our children with special dietary needs.

Food allergies and food intolerances

A food allergy occurs when a person's immune system reacts to allergens that are harmless to other people. Most food allergies are caused by peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, sesame seeds, fish and shellfish, soy, lupin and wheat. These must be declared whenever they are present in food as ingredients (or as components of food additives or processing aids), however small the amounts present.

Foods that are common causes of an allergic reaction, ingredients to avoid and products that might contain the ingredients include but are not limited to:

- Peanut
- Tree nuts
- Milk
- Eggs
- Sesame
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Soy
- Wheat
- Lupin

Adverse reactions to foods (food intolerances) occur in a small proportion of the population. These reactions are not the same as allergies, but may include:

- rashes and swelling of the skin, asthma, and stuffy or runny nose
- irritable bowel symptoms, colic, bloating, and diarrhoea
- migraines, headaches, lethargy, and irritability.

Both added ingredients, including food additives and processing aids, and naturally occurring food components, such as salicylates, lactose and gluten may be involved in food intolerance. Dairy products contain common ingredients that cause intolerances.

Responsibility

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) state that like any food service provider, early childhood education centres have a responsibility to help parents/carers and children by providing information about food allergens that may be present directly and/or indirectly in food menu items.

Footscray Early Learning Centre will ensure that we:

- Provide clear, up-to-date and accurate information on the food allergen status of the foods we provide and clearly display in the Centre (outside of the Kitchen) the Children's Menus used and Foods/Dishes that are going to be served to the children.
- Make sure staff are trained by appropriately qualified people through reputable training organisations in food allergen risks, management and communication so that they can:
 - minimise a child's exposure to allergens
 - ensure that staff are always prepared to respond appropriately in case of an allergic reaction, including a potentially life-threatening reaction (anaphylaxis)
 - ensure children with a food allergy are able to participate in the same/slightly adapted educational and recreational activities as their peers
- Staff are aware of a child's ASCIA (Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy) Action Plan and will prepare an Individual Health Care/Management Plan created in consultation with the parent/caregiver of all children with food allergies and/or food intolerances.
- Upon employment of new or relief staff, Management will go over the allergy requirements of the children in their care.

Procedure/Instructions

- Children's special dietary needs, food allergies, food intolerances, strong dislikes and any cultural food/dietary requirements are discussed and documented on acceptance/enrolment of a child to the Centre. These details are updated as the child's dietary needs are reviewed or as informed by parents/carers. Allergy and Anaphylaxis Action Plan documents/information, Doctors communication for the child must be provided by the parent/carer upon enrolment and before the child's first day.
- Centre staff/management must advise the child's parent/carer that they can prepare meals that do not include the allergen as an ingredient however the Centre cannot guarantee that there are no traces of the allergen in food served at the Centre as the meals prepared in a kitchen where menu items containing known allergens are prepared. For severe food allergies, staff/management may need to consider sourcing a supplier of individually packaged allergen-free meals or meals prepared and bought in by the child's parent/carer.
- After enrolment/acceptance to the Centre, Management will notify the Cook and Kitchen Staff of any special dietary requirements, food allergies and food options for all children with special dietary needs, food allergies, food intolerances, strong dislikes and any cultural food/dietary requirements. Management will ensure that food service staff are clearly informed of the type of reaction to food (allergy or intolerance) and the outcomes of serving this food to the child. Copies of all

documented special dietary needs including food allergies for any children will be provided to the kitchen and also to the room staff caring for the children.

- With prior consent from the family, management will ensure that an identifiable poster/document is created and displayed in the Kitchen, staff room and childrens rooms that contains a photograph of the child, their allergies and treatment required. In the event of a confirmed case/s of Anaphylaxis, a notice will be displayed in a public place in the service foyer or entry door to inform families and visitors of that case, (child/s name will not be used) .In cases of severe allergy or Anaphylaxis reaction Management will call a meeting with the Cook and Kitchen Staff to discuss firsthand the requirements for the child. Children enrolled with severe allergies will be supervised by a centre staff member at all times during meal times.
- When allergen free meals are made, the ingredients should be purchased that are free of the identified allergens (e.g. gluten free flour). These allergen free ingredients should be clearly labelled and stored separately in food grade containers with tight fitting lids.
- The Cook and Kitchen Staff must check prior to cooking/preparing from a recipe, the ingredient listings of the recipe being used for possible allergens and also check the labels and packaging of ingredients for allergen warnings (e.g.sauces,stocks,gravy etc).
- When preparing and handling allergen free meals, use a separate preparation area and separate equipment where possible. If there are no separate preparation areas, prepare allergen free food before other menu items and ensure that all equipment used is clean and sanitised before use.
- All staff are to ensure their hands are washed before preparing or serving any food to a child with an allergy.
- Prior to the food shopping/ordering day the Cook and Kitchen staff must ensure that the menu is reviewed to include the children with allergies.
- Children who have allergies will be given an alternative as close as possible to the original item listed on the menu.
- The preparation and storage of food items needs to be considered for all children who are allergenic or who have food related intolerances. Food ingredients, utensils and equipment for allergy sufferers must have no contact with other foods or equipment used for other prepared meals. The cook and Kitchen staff must ensure that the area and the equipment that the food is being prepared on are clean and sterilised prior to preparing any food for children with allergies.
- All staff members must wash their hands in between handling food for children with allergies to ensure that they do not contaminate the food.
- Complete and clearly display the **Food Allergen Matrix** for each proposed menu item. This Matrix should clearly identify all allergens for each menu item.

Corrective Action

Corrective action may include:

- Re-label containers so they can be easily identified
- Dispose of food that may be contaminated through cross contamination

- Providing separate utensils and equipment for allergen foods to prevent cross contamination
- Update the food documentation and information currently in place if a new allergy is identified
- Retrain staff

The Cook and Kitchen Staff , Food Safety Supervisor(s) and Management will review and check on an on going basis approved Allergen Information resources to ensure that they are aware and maintaining effective Allergen management and best practice.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) foodstandards.gov.au is a resource for child care centre staff and contains information such as the food allergen portal which has been created by the Allergen Collaboration to provide different sectors in the community with links to best practice food allergen resources and key messages to promote in the different sectors.