

# DECLARING ALLERGENS

Food allergies can be life threatening and are a growing concern in Australia. In fact, Australia has one of the highest allergy prevalence rates in the world. In NSW alone, food allergies occur in approximately 1 in 20 children and 2 in 100 adults.

The food industry plays a major role in helping to manage food allergies. This factsheet has been developed for all food manufacturers, food retailers and food importers to help them understand their obligations about declaring allergens to ensure it is safe for customers.

## Responsibility for declaring allergens

Food manufacturers are responsible for managing the unintentional presence of food allergens.

Food retailers have a responsibility to consumers if a food allergy is disclosed. Food retailers are required to assist the customer with food menu choices by providing information on allergen content that may be present directly and/or indirectly on food menu items.

Importers are responsible for ensuring their imports are properly labelled and for providing clear and accurate information about the allergen status of their product.

## Meeting requirements of the Food Standards Code

All food businesses need to meet the legal requirements of the Food Standards Code set out in:

- *Standard 1.2.3 Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations*

The Food Standards Code requires all food businesses in NSW to provide information about the ten most common allergens on food labels of packaged foods:

- peanut
- tree nut
- egg
- cow's milk
- fish
- crustacean
- sesame
- soy
- wheat
- lupin

Gluten and sulphites must also be declared on food labels of packaged foods.

Food businesses must ensure:

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

## Key points for managing allergens

It's important for manufacturers and retailers to:

- implement an effective allergen management plan
- train staff in food allergen risks, management and communication
- provide clear and accurate information on the allergen status of your product(s)
- have a plan in place to manage the unintentional presence of food allergens.

For importers, it's essential to:

- provide clear and accurate information on the allergen status of the imported product
- ensure their imports are properly labelled



- advise overseas suppliers about labelling requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.
- have a plan in place to manage the unintentional presence of food allergens.

## More information

- visit the NSW Food Authority website at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406
- Standard 1.2.3 Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations: [www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2011C00610](http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2011C00610)
- User Guide – Standard 1.2.3 Mandatory Warning and Advisory Statements and Declarations: [www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/userguide/pages/warningandadvisoryde1403.aspx](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/userguide/pages/warningandadvisoryde1403.aspx)
- Food Standards Code (Food allergies and intolerances – food allergen portal): [www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/foodallergies/food\\_allergen\\_portal/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/foodallergies/food_allergen_portal/Pages/default.aspx)

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).