

# FOOD ALLERGIES

**Source:** The University of Rhode Island Food Safety Education website.  
<http://web.uri.edu/foodsafety/food-allergies/>

A food allergy is a violent reaction to an otherwise harmless food that involves the body's immune system. An allergen is any substance which produces an allergic reaction.

To a small percentage of the population, food allergies can be fatal.

FDA believes there is scientific consensus that the following foods can cause serious allergic reactions in some individuals and account for more than 90 percent of all food allergies:

1. **Peanuts**
2. **Tree Nuts (i.e. Walnuts, Cashews)**
3. **Soy/Soybeans**
4. **Milk**
5. **Egg**
6. **Fish**
7. **Shellfish**
8. **Wheat**

Allergic reactions can begin within minutes to a few hours after eating the problem food. However, in very sensitive individuals, just touching or smelling the food can result in an allergic reaction.

Most often, but not always, the symptoms of an allergic reaction begin with: a sensation that the lips and tongue are swelling; itching or tingling in the mouth; sensation of warmth; redness to the skin, hives; tightness in the throat; eyes may itch, water and swell; nausea, vomiting, cramping, diarrhea; Anaphylaxis occurs when several parts of the body have food-allergic reactions at the same time. This condition is rare, but can be fatal.

Symptoms of food allergy vary among individuals as to the severity, when they begin and the amount of food that is eaten. The same food can produce different reactions in different people and different foods can cause the same reaction in one person. Individuals with asthma appear to be at greater risk of food allergies.

Diagnosing and managing a food allergy requires medical treatment. Once the food allergy is confirmed through an examination including a complete medical history and a series of specialized tests, the only proven treatment is to avoid the offending food.

To eliminate the offending food from the diet it is necessary to read and understand food ingredient labels. Labels should be re-checked regularly as the ingredients in products change. "Secret" ingredients which are considered allergens such as peanuts, nuts, eggs, milk, shellfish and fish should not be used in any food items.

## Event Planning: Food Allergies and Food Safety Information

Avoid cross contamination during preparation of food items. Cross contamination is the transfer of one food ingredient to another food ingredient by a nonfood contact surface (i.e. human hands, cooking utensils).

If an individual has an allergic reaction, respond quickly. Ask if there is a history of food allergies and check for a medical bracelet or necklace. In Rhode Island, the majority of individuals with this problem carry a syringe loaded with epinephrine (Epi Pen) which can be easily injected. Call 911 for immediate medical assistance. The sooner the reaction is treated, the less severe it will be. People have died because they have disregarded their symptoms.

### Persons sensitive to these specific allergens should avoid the following foods/ingredients:

#### Peanuts

- Peanuts
- Cold pressed peanut oil
- Mixed nuts
- Nu-nuts flavored nuts
- Peanut butter
- Peanut flour
- Foods containing peanut protein including
- Chinese and Thai dishes - egg rolls
- Baked goods-pastries, cookies, Danish
- Candy
- Chili
- Marzipan
- Soups

#### Tree-nuts

- Almonds
- Brazil nuts Cashews
- Chestnuts
- Filberts/hazelnuts
- Hickory nuts
- Giandiju (chocolate nut mix)
- Macadamia nuts
- Marzipan/Almond paste

#### Eggs

- Albumin
- Egg (including whites and yolk)
- Eggnog
- Mayonnaise and other dressings
- Ovalbumin
- Ovomuroid
- Simplesse

- Egg-based glaze on baked goods

#### Milk

- Cream
- Curds
- Dry milk solids
- Lactalbumin, lactalbumin phosphate
- Lactose
- Milk (derivative, protein, solids)
- Artificial butter flavor
- Butter, butter fat
- Buttermilk
- Casein, rennet casein
- Cheese
- Sour cream
- Sour cream or milk solids
- Caseinates (ammonium, calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium)
- Whey (delactosed, demineralized, protein concentrate)
- Yogurt

#### Fish

- Anchovy (including anchovy paste)
- Caviar
- Fish byproducts
- Imitation crab (surimi)
- Roe
- Oil used to fry fish would cause a reaction

## 6 Consumer Control Points for Food Safety

## Event Planning: Food Allergies and Food Safety Information

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**Sources:** RI Department of Health, The Centers for Disease Control, The U.S. Food and Drug Association and the food safety websites at URI and Iowa State. For additional information, please visit the following sites:

[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov), [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food), [vm.cfsan.fda.gov](http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov), [www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/consumer.html](http://www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/consumer.html), [www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety)

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We ask that you use these minimum guidelines to improve and maximize the safety of the food you are providing for your event.

The first step in doing so is to ensure that you use approved and trusted food sources and that the food is prepared safely.

### 1. Purchasing

#### A. Keep your food safe from the moment you put it in your grocery cart.

- Purchase meat and poultry products last.
- Keep packages of raw meat and poultry separate from other foods.
- Consider using plastic bags to enclose individual packages of raw meat and poultry.
- Make sure meat and poultry products are refrigerated as soon as possible after purchase.
- Canned goods should be free of dents, cracks or bulging lids. (Botulism is a concern.)

#### B. When buying food and taking it home, remember to

- Keep raw meat and poultry away from other foods, especially fresh foods like fruits and vegetables
- Place raw meat and poultry at the lowest level of the cart, so it can't drip on other foods
- Make sure foods are kept cold between the store and your home
- Take into account the outside temperature and adjust your trip home so that that food you purchase at the grocery store will not reach the **DANGER ZONE**, between 40° and 140°F (5-60°C).
- Check package sell-by or pull-by dates to make sure they are current
- Make sure you have enough storage space in the refrigerator or on your shelves

#### C. When purchasing food from a vendor or having it catered, remember to

- Consider our *Brown First* policy
- Use only Brown Dining Services approved vendors. These vendors have provided the necessary documentation of their RI Department of Health Food licensing, certifications and liability insurances.

### 2. Storing

**Proper storage maintains quality and prevents contamination.**

- At home, refrigerate or re-wrap and freeze meat, fish and poultry immediately.

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- To prevent raw juices from dripping on other foods, store meat, fish and poultry in plastic bags or on a plate.
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after handling raw meat, poultry or seafood products.
- Store canned goods in a cool, clean, dry place. Avoid extreme heat or cold.

### 3. Preparing

**Food can cause food borne illness when conditions in the environment encourage bacterial growth.**

- The importance of hand-washing cannot be overemphasized.
- Don't let juices from raw meat, poultry or seafood come in contact with cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits or salad ingredients.
- Wash hands, counters, equipment, utensils and cutting boards with soap and water immediately after use.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator, **never at room temperature**.
- When using a microwave oven to thaw food, cook it immediately after thawing.
- Always wash and rinse your cutting board between uses, especially after cutting up raw meat. **Wash and rinse using hot, soapy water. Sanitize and air dry.**
- Use the *10 Steps to a Safe Kitchen* to ensure your food is prepared in a safe manner.

### 4. Cooking.

**Thorough cooking destroys harmful bacteria.**

- Cook food thoroughly. If harmful bacteria are present, only thorough cooking will destroy them.
- **Use a meat thermometer** to determine if your meat, poultry or casserole has reached a safe internal temperature.
- Avoid interrupted cooking. **Never partially cook products** to later finish them on the grill or in the oven.
- When microwaving foods, use microwave-safe containers. Cover, rotate, and allow for standing time of at least two minutes, which contributes to thorough cooking.

### 5. Serving

**Choose a serving style which will allow food to be served as quickly as possible, while maintaining desirable temperatures below 40° (4°C) or above 140°F (60°C).**

- Wash hands with soap and water before serving or eating food.
- Never leave potentially hazardous foods, raw or cooked, at room temperature any longer than necessary--**NEVER** longer than 2 hours.
- Keep **hot foods above 140°F (60°C)** and **cold foods below 40°F (4°C)**.
- RI Law states that *Consumers under the age of twelve may not be served raw or partially cooked comminuted foods of animal origin.*
- Provide information regarding ingredients to alert persons with food allergies. Cross contamination during preparation is also dangerous for persons with allergies. Some of the most common food allergens are: milk, fish, shellfish, wheat, eggs, nuts, citrus, melons, strawberries and soy.

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- When serving food, wear non-latex rubber or plastic gloves such as vinyl, nitrile and synthetics. The State of RI has banned latex gloves in food establishments to protect the public from the increasing problem of latex allergies.

## 6. Handling Leftovers

### Follow these steps to ensure safe handling of leftovers:

- Refrigerate within 2 hours of cooking.
- Wash hands before and after handling leftovers.
- Use clean utensils and surfaces.
- Divide leftovers into small units and store in shallow containers for quick cooling.
- Reheat leftovers thoroughly to a temperature of 165°. Bring soups, sauces and gravies to a rolling boil.
- The most common food handling mistake is cooling food too slowly!
- **If in doubt, throw it out!**

## 10 Steps to a Safer Kitchen

**Sources:** RI Department of Health, The Centers for Disease Control, The U.S. Food and Drug Association and the food safety websites at URI and Iowa State. For additional information, please visit the following sites:

[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov), [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food), [vm.cfsan.fda.gov](http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov), [www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/consumer.html](http://www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/consumer.html), [www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety)

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We ask that you use these minimum guidelines to improve and maximize the safety of your food production efforts. The first step in doing so is to ensure that you use approved and trusted food sources and that the food is prepared safely. Safe kitchen practices when preparing foods is a critical component of your planning.

### 1. Your Refrigerator:

- **Keep your refrigerator at 40° F (4° C) or less.** A temperature of 40°F or less is important because it slows the growth of most bacteria. The fewer bacteria there are, the less likely you are to get sick from them.

### 2. Perishable Foods:

- Refrigerate cooked, perishable food as soon as possible **within two hours after cooking.** A temperature of 40°F (4°C) or less is important because it slows the growth of most bacteria. The fewer bacteria there are, the less likely you are to get sick from them.
- Date leftovers so they can be used within two to three days.
- If in doubt, throw it out!

### 3. Kitchen Dishcloths and Sponges:

- **Sanitize your kitchen dishcloths and sponges regularly.**
- Wash with a solution of one teaspoon chlorine bleach to one quart water, or use a commercial sanitizing agent, following product directions.

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- Many cooks use dishcloths or sponges to mop up areas where they have worked with uncooked meat and then reuse the cloth or sponge in other kitchen areas after minimal rinsing.
- A contaminated dishcloth can house millions of bacteria after a few hours. Consider using paper towels to clean up and then throw them away immediately. Wash hands carefully after handling raw meat.
- Use germ-resistant sponges and/or anti-bacterial soaps and disinfectants/cleaners to help cut down on bacteria growth.

## 4. Cutting Boards & Utensils: Wash them with soap and hot water after each use.

- Never allow raw meat, poultry, and fish to come in contact with other foods. Washing with only a damp cloth will not remove bacteria. Wash counters, cutting boards, utensils thoroughly.
- Periodically washing your cutting board in a bleach solution is the best way to prevent bacteria from remaining on your cutting board.

## 5. Cooking Meats

- **Cook ground beef, red meats and poultry products to a safe internal temperature. Use a meat thermometer.**
- Cooking food, including ground meat patties, to an internal temperature of at least 160°F (72°C) usually protects against food borne illness.
- Ground beef can be contaminated with potentially dangerous [E. coli O157:H7](#) bacteria.
- The US Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) advised consumers to [use a meat thermometer](#) when cooking hamburger and not rely on the internal color of the meat to be sure it is safe to eat. This change resulted from research that indicates some ground meat may turn prematurely brown before a safe internal temperature of 160°F (72°C) is reached.

## 6. Mixes Containing Egg

- **Don't eat raw or lightly cooked eggs.**
- Many older cookbooks have recipes for ice cream, mayonnaise, eggnog and some desserts that call for raw eggs. These recipes are no longer recommended because of the risk of [Salmonella](#). The commercial versions of these products are made with pasteurized eggs (eggs that have been sufficiently heated to kill bacteria) and are not a food hazard.
- Remember--this means no sampling of cake batters and cookie dough before they are baked!

## 7. Kitchen Counters

- **Clean kitchen counters and other surfaces that come in contact with food with hot water and detergent or a solution of bleach and water.**
- Bleach and commercial cleaning agents are best for getting rid of pathogens. Hot water and detergent do a good job, too, but may not kill all strains of bacteria.
- Keep sponges and [dishcloths](#) clean because, when wet, these materials harbor bacteria and may encourage their growth.

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### 8. Washing Dishes by Hand

- **Allow dishes and utensils to air-dry in order to eliminate re-contamination from hands or towels.**
- When washing dishes by hand, it's best to wash them all within two hours--before bacteria can begin to form.

### 9. Washing Hands

- **Wash hands with soap and warm water immediately after handling raw meat, poultry, or fish.**
- Wash for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, especially raw meat. If you have an infection or cut on your hands, wear non-latex rubber or plastic gloves such as vinyl, nitrile and synthetics. RI State Law prohibits latex gloves in food establishments to protect the public from the increasing problem of latex allergies.

### 10. Defrosting Meats

- **Defrost meat, poultry and fish products in the refrigerator, microwave oven, or cold water that is changed every 30 minutes.**
- Follow package directions for thawing foods in the microwave.
- Cook microwave-defrosted food immediately after thawing.
- Changing water every 30 minutes when thawing foods in cold water ensures that the food is kept cold, an important factor for slowing bacterial growth on the outside while inner areas are still thawing.

### Why is Hand Washing Important?

Source: The RI Department of Health, The Centers for Disease Control, and the RI Food Safety Education websites. For additional information, please visit the following sites:

[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov), [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food), [www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/service.html](http://www.uri.edu/ce/ceec/food/service.html)

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Hand washing is the single most important way of preventing the spread of infections, according to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Food-borne illness outbreaks often are caused by poor hygiene, usually unwashed or poorly washed hands on the part of the food handler. Many diarrheal illnesses (salmonellas, hepatitis A, and shigellosis) can be passed from person to person when someone doesn't wash his hands after using the bathroom and then passes it along to someone else by handling food, shaking hands, or touching something.

Unwashed or poorly washed hands are responsible for 1 in 4 food borne illnesses.

Unwashed or poorly washed hands are a very common way of spreading many diseases, such as: colds, flu, ear infections, strep throat, diarrhea, and other intestinal problems.

Germs and viruses causing these diseases are passed by such routine things as handling food, touching doorknobs, shaking hands, and putting your mouth on a telephone receiver. The spread of many germs and viruses can be reduced by hand washing with soap and water.

#### When should I wash my hands?

- After using bathroom
- After blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing
- Before eating or handling food
- After handling uncooked meat
- After taking out the trash
- After changing a diaper
- After handling money
- After playing with a pet, especially reptiles, iguanas, turtles, snakes
- Also, try not to touch your mouth, eyes, or ears when hands are unwashed.

#### How do I properly wash my hands?

- Use hot or warm running water.
- Lather hands with soap (any kind).
- Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Wash the back of hands, between fingers, and under fingernails.
- Rinse with warm water
- Thoroughly dry hands with a clean paper towel.
- Using a paper towel instead of bare hands, turn off the water, open restroom doors (if needed), then throw away the paper towel.