

February 2018

Certified Food Safety Managers Course (ServSafe):
Classes are held at the Gwinnett Environmental Health Dept —

Location

455 Grayson Hwy. Ste 600
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Class hours

First Class: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Second Class: 8:30 AM — Test given promptly. **No one will be admitted late to class or testing.**

* If at least 10 people have not registered for the class it, will be cancelled and rescheduled. *

Tentative Schedule:

January 22-23
February 19-20
March 19-20

Cost is \$150.00

On-site Food Safety Training:

A food service establishment may schedule and an on-site class in food safety at their facility. The instructor is an Environmental Health Specialist. The cost is \$125 for groups of three (3) individuals.



Gwinnett County
Environmental Health
455 Grayson Hwy
Suite 600
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Phone: 770-963-5132
Fax: 770-339-4282

Allergy Awareness

As a food service operator/owner, what is one of your primary goals? Serve the best [*insert your best dish*] that the community has ever had? Make more money than your competition? Make your customers feel at home in your food service establishment? I'll give you a hint: since you're reading this newsletter, your goal should have something to do with food safety.

Done guessing? Well, while all of those goals are great to have, from a food safety standpoint you want to make sure you are serving the best tasting food in the SAFEST way possible. (See how that worked out?)

In this edition, we will focus on “food allergies”: What are they? What are the signs/symptoms to look for? What is required under the 2015 GA Food Code? How to prevent cross-contact? Etc.

Millions of Americans suffer from food allergies.¹ While some of these reactions may be mild, other reactions may be severe or life-threatening. This is why, in 2015, the Georgia Department of Public Health has made it a requirement that local Environmental Health Departments educate food service establishment on the issues of food allergens and enforce rules to help reduce the occurrence food allergy reactions.

What Are “Food Allergies”?

By definition, an *allergen* is any substance capable of producing an “allergy”. An *allergy* is an abnormal reaction of the bodies immune system to an allergen. Therefore, a food allergy occurs when someone ingests, inhales, or comes in contact with a food that causes the body to activate its defense mechanisms.

What Are Some Signs/Symptoms Of An Allergic Reaction?

Allergic reactions usually occur in a fairly quick amount of time (from a few minutes to a few hours). Some symptoms include:

hives; rash; tingling or itchy sensation in the mouth; swelling of the face, lips, or tongue; coughing; difficulty breathing; swelling of the throat; loss of consciousness.

These symptoms can be mild, but may become much more severe if not treated and could lead to *anaphylaxis*.

Anaphylaxis is a severe reaction that can lead to:

- Closing of the throat
- Closing of the airways in the lungs
- Severe drop in blood pressure (anaphylactic shock)
- Death in some cases

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that food related anaphylaxis cases account for:

- 30,000 emergency room visits
- 2,000 hospitalizations
- 150 deaths

What Are The Most Common Food Allergens?

The FDA reports that there are over 160 foods that people may be allergic to. However, the allergies known as the “*Big 8*” can cause 90 percent of food allergic reactions.¹ Those foods are as follows:

1. Milk
2. Eggs
3. Fish (i.e., bass, flounder, cod)
4. Shellfish
5. Tree nuts (i.e., almonds, walnuts, pecans)
6. Peanuts
7. Wheat



Questions or suggestions for future issues?

Email Jason.Reagan@gnrhealth.com

Food Allergies

what you need to know

Millions of people have food allergies that can range from mild to life-threatening.

Most Common Food Allergens



* Always let the guest make their own informed decision.

When a guest informs you that someone in their party has a food allergy, follow the four R's below:

- **Refer** the food allergy concern to the chef, manager, or person in charge.
- **Review** the food allergy with the guest and check ingredient labels.
- **Remember** to check the preparation procedure for potential cross-contact.
- **Respond** to the guest and inform them of your findings.

Allergic reactions can include:

- Hives
- Flushed skin or rash
- Tingling or itchy sensation in the mouth
- Face, tongue, or lip swelling
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Coughing or wheezing
- Dizziness and/or lightheadedness
- Swelling of the throat and vocal cords
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of consciousness
- Anaphylaxis
- Death

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Visit www.gnrhealth.com for more posters on food safety. This poster is available on our website in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

What Is Required By The 2015 GA Food Code?

Under the 2015 GA Food Code [5116-1.03(2)(1)], it is required that food allergy awareness is a part of **food safety training**. Simple enough, right? But, what does this actually mean?

This means employees: a) must be aware of the most common food allergies b) know what to do if a customer informs the staff of a food allergy. At the very least all employees should be trained to note any allergies that a customer may have to later communicate to the person-in-charge. The person-in-charge should be educated enough to further guide staff on safe food handling practices.

As another requirement of 2015 GA Food Code, each food service establishment is required to have at least one Certified Food Safety Manager (or CFSM) on staff. It is this person's responsibility to incorporate allergy awareness into the establishment's food safety training and policies.

It is not required that a test or a form be created showing that employees have been educated on food allergens; however, a form is strongly recommend as a part of the training program.

During an inspection, your inspector will ask you and/or your employees questions about food allergies (such as, what are the most common food allergens and what do you do if someone tells you they have a food allergy). It's okay to look at a poster on the wall (we encourage this type of "cheating").

How to prevent "cross-contact"?

Before discussing how to prevent *cross-contact*, let's differentiate it from *cross-contamination*².

Cross-contamination is the spread of microorganisms from raw foods to ready-to-eat. The harmful effects of cross contamination can be reduced or eliminated by proper cooking of foods. This is why it's important to prepare/store raw animal foods or dirty produce away from ready-to-eat foods.

Cross-contact occurs when an allergen is inadvertently transferred from a food containing an allergen to a food that does not contain the allergen. **Cooking does not reduce or eliminate** the chances of a person with a food allergy having a reaction to the food eaten.

Here are some tips to prevent cross-contact:

- Use clean and sanitized equipment that has not come in contact with other foods
- Designate certain pieces of equipment for specific allergies
- Ensure hands are washed properly before handling clean equipment and foods
- Have a detailed conversations with the customer to understand what allergy they have and to help them make an informed decision
- Post educational posters of food allergies throughout the prep area
- List food allergies in food brochures and on websites for customers to have easy access

Sources:

1. Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. (n.d.). Allergens - Food Allergies: What You Need to Know. Retrieved January 16, 2018, from <https://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/FoodAllergens/ucm079311.htm>
2. What is a Food Allergy? (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2018, from <https://www.foodallergy.org/life-with-food-allergies/food-allergy-101/what-is-a-food-allergy>