

Dietary requirements are common and may be due to medical conditions, religious beliefs, health benefits or ethical decisions. Whatever the reason, catering for dietary requirements in community venues is important.

## Food allergy

- Food allergy is an immune system reaction to a food protein
- The most severe form of an allergic reaction is anaphylaxis and can be fatal
- The top 10 allergens in Australia include:

- egg
- fish
- lupin

- milk
- peanuts
- sesame

- shellfish
- soy
- tree nuts

- wheat



- However, people may be allergic to any food, even fruits or vegetables
- For individuals with a food allergy, their only option is to avoid the food, as even traces of the allergen containing food can lead to a potentially life threatening reaction
- It is important when preparing or providing food to someone with a food allergy that you:
  1. Know what's in your food
  2. Be 100% truthful
  3. Prepare food safely
  4. Understand the consequences.

The National Allergy Strategy's *All About Allergens* training provides access to food service training that is fast, easy and free. This comprehensive training program provides need to know information relevant for those in the food service and is presented using videos and interactive activities. Access the training at: <https://foodallergytraining.org.au>.

## Food intolerances

- Intolerances do not involve the immune system
- They can be caused by naturally present or added food chemicals
- Intolerances are not life threatening but can cause pain, discomfort and decreased life quality if not managed correctly
- For individuals with a food intolerance, managing this means avoiding the food.

## What about gluten?

- People with medically diagnosed Coeliac disease need to avoid gluten and gluten containing products,
- For people with Coeliac disease, consuming even small amounts can cause pain and discomfort.
- For more information, visit the Coeliac Australia website at <https://coeliac.org.au/>.



## Vegetarians and vegans

- Vegetarian diets are common and increasing
- People may choose to be vegetarian for many reasons e.g. ethical reasons, religious beliefs, environmental concerns, taste or health
- The cost of meat and/or animal products may also be a consideration
- It's important to respect these choices and cater accordingly.



## Religion

Visit the WA School Canteen Association website for great vegetarian recipes [www.waschoolcanteens.org.au/recipes](http://www.waschoolcanteens.org.au/recipes)

- Different religions have different dietary requirements
- Some religions are strict vegetarian and others have particular requirements about how foods are prepared, served or consumed e.g. Halal, Kosher or Hinduism.

## Other diets

- There is a wide range of other diet requirements that you may encounter at your food service.

## What can you do?

As a food service, it is your responsibility by law to know what is in your food and provide accurate information to your customers. For any dietary request it is important to confirm this with the customer, pass on the information to the chef, manager or person in charge, provide the customer with the information they need to make an informed choice about their food or drink selections.

### References

- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy. (2019). Food Allergy. Retrieved from <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/food-allergy>
- Coeliac Australia. (2019). Coeliac Disease. Retrieved from <https://www.coeliac.org.au/coeliac-disease/>
- National Allergy Strategy. (2019). Food Allergy Training. Retrieved from <https://foodallergytraining.org.au/>