

FOOD SAFETY TOPIC: ALLERGENS

Allergens are proteins, most often eaten or inhaled, that cause physiological reactions due to an immunological response in the body and causes an allergic reaction. Immunoglobulin E (IgE) is a class of antibody associated with the allergic response that triggers the release of chemicals such as histamine. Allergens are considered Chemical Hazards.

CFIA's priority allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy, fish, crustaceans and molluscs, wheat and triticale, eggs, milk, mustard and sulphites. Note that priority allergens differ by country. Be aware of the allergens and labelling requirements for any countries you are exporting to. For example, celery is considered an allergen in Europe but not in North America.

Having an Allergen Management Program in place is a key part of preventing mistakes. It can prevent your consumers from eating something that can cause them to have an allergic reaction, go into anaphylactic shock, or even cause death. If a mistake is made, it could affect:

- Consumer perceptions, attitudes and trust due to adverse media coverage.
- Product, brand, and franchise image.
- Regulatory attitudes and trust.

Potential sources of food allergens are:

- Unknown ingredients in raw material.
- Misformulation and rework.
- Ineffective clean-up and storage procedures.
- Cross-contact by dust or pieces of the allergen on equipment, utensils, in bulk carriers and on personnel.

Mislabelling (using incorrect or old labels with no allergen declaration or using lubricants without an allergen declaration on the labels).

Discussion point – Within our operation, name some potential sources of food allergens

Employee and processing flows must be designed to control risks of cross-contact to ensure foods containing allergens are kept separate from foods that do not contain allergens.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Good personal hygiene and personnel processing practices (i.e., handwashing, wearing clean clothes).
- Follow traffic flow for employees and visitors to ensure adequate separation of those handling allergenic materials vs. non-allergenic materials.
- Ensure adequate separation and control measures are in place when processing allergens in a processing room with the non-allergenic product.
- Use separate equipment (dedicated lines where possible) and utensils for allergen-containing and non-allergen-containing products.
- Employees should be designated for different lines.
- Ensure proper production scheduling (i.e., process non-allergen-containing products first, on separate days, or after a full, effective clean-up and sanitization).
- Perform pre-operational clean-up and inspection if allergen products are produced mid-shift.
- Verify that cleaning was effective through visual inspection, protein/allergen swabs, etc.
- Evaluate areas of shared equipment or physical cross-over to ensure no cross-contact points.
- Allergens in employee lunches (handwashing is key, leaving work effects at the worksite to avoid cross-contact).
- Use designated allergen storage areas (where applicable). Store allergens separately or on the bottom rack to prevent cross-contact in the event of a spill.
- Separate shipping of allergenic ingredients and products.
- Ensure all incoming ingredients are properly labelled.
- Have allergen clean-up procedures in place in the case of a spill.
- Ensure food-grade lubricants used do not contain allergens.
- Confirm correct labelling and verifications
- Dispose of obsolete materials (i.e., labels, formulation documents, ingredients, etc.) to ensure they are not mistakenly used.
- Ensure rework is properly labelled and that only like goes into like.
- Ensure you've received training on your Allergen Management Program.
- Report any unacceptable conditions to your Food Safety Team.

Discussion point – List some procedures that are in place as part of your Allergen Management Program.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [PERENNIA.CA/QUALITY-FOOD-SAFETY](https://perennia.ca/quality-food-safety)

Date/Shift Identifier:

Supervisor/Lead Hand (name and initials):

Session Facilitator (if not the same as above) (name and initials):

EMPLOYEES WHO ATTENDED

Name:

Initials:

EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK, QUESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

TALKING POINTS COVERED

(add in any additional aspects or references of material covered that are specific to your operation):

Horizontal lines for writing talking points covered.

Horizontal lines for writing employee feedback, questions, and recommendations.



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