

MAJOR FOOD ALLERGENS

Responsibilities of the PIC

“The Big 8”

Eight major foods account for 90 percent of all food allergies. They are:

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts (such as almonds, pecans, and walnuts)
- Crustacean shellfish (such as crab, lobster, and shrimp)
- Fish (such as salmon, tuna, and halibut)
- Eggs
- Milk
- Soy
- Wheat

These eight foods, and any ingredient that contains protein derived from one or more of them, are designated as “major food allergens.” Examples of some food products that may allergens as ingredients include:

- Candy
- Glazes
- Sauces
- Meat substitutes

Symptoms

Symptoms of an allergic reaction include:

- Stomachache
- Vomiting
- Hives
- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling
- Blood pressure drop
- Shock

These symptoms can occur right away or up to several hours after exposure to an allergen.

Regarding allergens, the PIC must:

- Be able to describe foods identified as major food allergens.
- Know the symptoms caused by the major food allergens.
- Ensure employees are trained in food safety, including food allergy awareness.

Allergen labeling

Allergen labeling is required for packaged food products that contain any of the eight major food allergens.

The label must identify by name any major food allergens in the product as part of the ingredient list. The list must also include protein derived from a major food allergen. Use one of the following labeling options:

1. List the common or usual name of the food source, followed by the name of the allergen in parentheses. Example: flour (wheat), whey (milk).

OR

2. After the ingredient list, place the word ‘Contains’ followed by the food allergen. Example: Contains: wheat, milk.

For tree nuts, declare the specific type of nut. Examples: Contains: almonds, coconuts, pecans.

For fish or crustacean shellfish, declare the species. Examples: Contains: walleye, shrimp, and lobster.