



## SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with  
National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World  
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

### LEADER TRAINING GUIDE

## *Food Allergy Basics*

Compiled by E.H. Hoyle, July 2006. Information from the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network.  
<http://www.foodallergy.org/>

### Objectives:

1. Participants will list some of the eight foods which commonly cause food allergy.
2. Participants will learn basic tips to follow when cooking or eating when a food allergy is involved.
3. Participants will be able to define anaphylaxis.
4. Participants will become familiar with symptoms commonly associated to an allergic reaction and how to treat someone suffering from an allergic reaction.

### References:

Do You Have A Food Allergy? <http://www.foodallergy.org/>

What You Should Know About Living With A Food Allergy. <http://www.foodallergy.org/>

### Before the Program:

Copy the Question Cards. Cut apart each question. Place all questions into a basket and have each participant to draw a card.

### Suggested Program Steps:

1. Ask each person to draw a question card. Allow time for them to think about an answer.
2. Go around the group asking each person to read their question and answer it if they think they know the answer.
3. Using the information here, answer the questions after they each have been read to the group. Order does not matter.

- **Question: What is the best treatment for food allergy?**

If you have a food allergy, the best treatment is strictly avoiding the food to which you are allergic. Read ingredient labels to avoid the allergy-causing food. If the doctor recommends medication, such as antihistamines or epinephrine to control reactions, carry it with you at all times.

- **Question: Is there a cure for food allergies?**

There is no cure for food allergies. Many people outgrow their food allergy, though allergies to peanuts, nuts, fish, and shellfish are often considered to be lifelong. Research continues and results look promising.

- **Question: What is the difference between a food allergy and a food intolerance?**

An adverse reaction to a food can be the result of either a food allergy or a food intolerance. Many people think these two terms mean the same thing, but they do not. A food allergy occurs when the immune system mistakenly believes that a food is harmful. A food intolerance is a metabolic disorder and does not involve the immune system. Lactose intolerance is a common example.

- **Question: What foods cause food allergy?**

Any food could potentially cause a reaction. But there are eight foods which are responsible for up to 90% of all food-allergic reactions. They are:

Milk

Eggs

Peanuts

Soy

Wheat

Tree nuts (such as pecans and walnuts)

Fish

Shellfish

- **Question: What are the symptoms of food allergy and anaphylaxis?**

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction. Symptoms can include:

A tingling sensation in the mouth

Rash

Swelling of the tongue and throat

Hives and swelling

Vomiting

Diarrhea

Wheezing

Difficulty breathing

Drop in blood pressure

Loss of consciousness

Symptoms usually appear within minutes to two hours after a person has eaten the food to which he or she is allergic. Very rarely do food allergic reactions cause death.

- **Question: How is a food allergy diagnosed?**

An allergist or your primary health care doctor combines your medical history along with test results to make a food allergy diagnosis. The two most common tests used to determine if an allergy exists are a prick skin test and a blood test. To help diagnose food allergy, it is essential for you to describe to the doctor the symptoms you experience and the foods you think may be causing the symptoms.

- **Question: How does one cook for someone with a food allergy?**

Care must be taken in the kitchen to avoid contact with allergy-causing ingredients. This can occur in a number of ways, such as splatter from allergy-containing foods to allergy-free foods or cross-contact (when one food comes in contact with another food, causing their proteins to mix; as a result, each food contains small amounts of the other food).

- **Question: What about dining away from home if someone has a food allergy?**

Hidden ingredients and cross-contact are common causes of reactions in restaurants. When dining out, speak with the restaurant manager to verify ingredients and cooking methods. Ordering simpler preparations will make dining out easier. For example, choose a grilled entrée over an entrée in a sauce.

- **Question: How many people suffer from food allergies? Is it really a problem?**

Approximately 11 million Americans suffer from food allergy, with 6.5 million allergic to seafood and 3 million allergic to peanuts or tree nuts. Approximately 2 million school-aged children have food allergy. One in every 20 children under 3 years old has food allergy. Convincing others that food allergy is real is often the most challenging part of living with a food allergy.

4. To review put the questions back into the basket. As a leader, draw each question from the basket and read it to the group. Ask them to answer the question, based on what they have learned in the lesson.

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## Question Cards

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What foods cause food allergy?

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What are the symptoms of food allergy and anaphylaxis?

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How is a food allergy diagnosed?

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How does one cook for someone with a food allergy?

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