

Strictly embargoed until 12.01am Monday, August 11, 2025

Keeping Kids Safe and Well-Fed: New National Allergy and Nutrition Training for Childcare Staff

A new national training program is helping long day care services across Australia respond to a growing need: how to safely manage food allergies while providing nutritious meals for children with diverse dietary requirements.

Around 1.3 million Australian children under the age of 12 attend childcare services¹. Of those in early childhood education and care, an estimated 52,000 to 86,000 children are living with a food allergy — highlighting the critical need for accessible, practical training for staff.

The free online course — developed by the National Nutrition Foundation's Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) in partnership with the National Allergy Council — includes 11 short, practical modules tailored for cooks, chefs and educators in early childhood education and care.

“This training will give long day care services the tools they need to prevent life-threatening allergic reactions and provide safe, inclusive food for all children,” said Dr Sandra Vale, CEO of the National Allergy Council. “There is no national requirement for food allergen management training in childcare, but it is essential. Cooks, chefs and educators want to do the right thing — this course will help them do it with confidence.”

The Managing Allergies and Other Dietary Requirements in Children's Education and Care course is now freely available on the HEAS and National Allergy Council websites. It offers practical strategies for:

- Managing food allergies and intolerances, including coeliac disease
- Minimising cross-contamination risks
- Maintaining nutritional quality while adapting meals for dietary needs
- Providing meals for vegetarian, halal and kosher diets
- Creating one inclusive menu that supports every child's health and wellbeing

A 2023 needs analysis conducted by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service found that cooks did not feel confident to modify menus to meet both nutritional and safety standards — resulting in duplicated work, inconsistent food provision, and increased risk of allergen exposure.

“Cooks are under huge pressure,” said Margaret Rozman, Co-CEO of the National Nutrition Foundation. “They are responsible for up to 70% of a child's daily nutrition — often while juggling allergies, intolerances and other food requirements. This course will help simplify that complexity and ensure all children are safely and appropriately fed.”

While the training was developed with support from the Victorian Department of Health, it is available nationally and aligns with the Victorian Government's [Menu planning guidelines for long day care](#) and National Quality Standard for food provision in early education and care.

The course is designed to complement National Allergy Council's All About Allergens for Children's Education and Care training developed for all cooks, chefs and educators working in this sector.

For more information, visit (links will be live from August 6):

<https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/training/managing-allergies-and-other-dietary-requirements-in-childrens-education-and-care/>

<https://foodallergytraining.org.au/>

- ENDS -

Distributed by Lanham Media on behalf of National Allergy Council

Media contacts:

Greg Townley | greg@lanhammedia.com.au | 0414 195 908

Fleur Townley | fleur@lanhammedia.com.au | 0405 278 758

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Spokespeople available for interview include:

- Dr Sandra Vale, CEO of the National Allergy Council
- Margaret Rozman, Co-CEO of the National Nutrition Foundation
- Vaishali Patel, Centre Chef, Bloom Early Learning Centre (works at Glen Iris and Lavern East)
- VIC, Clyde – Mum of a 3-year-old who had an anaphylactic reaction after being given an allergen at childcare.
- VIC, Dandenong – Mum of a 5-year-old with multiple food allergies. First anaphylaxis occurred at childcare after exposure to an allergen.
- Case studies from other States may be available on request

Media Assets available [here](#)

About the National Allergy Council

The National Allergy Council is a partnership between the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA). The National Allergy Council aims to improve the health and quality of life of Australians with allergic diseases and minimise the burden on individuals, carers, healthcare services, and the community. The National Allergy Council receives funding from the Australian Government, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. For more information, visit: <https://nationalallergycouncil.org.au/>.

About the Healthy Eating Advisory Service

Since 2012, the Healthy Eating Advisory Service has supported organisations across Victoria to promote healthier foods and drinks and meet government food and drink policies and guidelines. We want to ensure that healthier food and drink options are 'the norm', not the exception. Our dedicated team of experienced dietitians, nutritionists, communications, digital and monitoring and evaluation professionals comes to work each day inspired to positively contribute to the health and wellbeing of all Victorians by increasing the supply and promotion of healthier food and drinks. The Healthy Eating Advisory Service is delivered by

the National Nutrition Foundation, with support from the Victorian Government. For more information, visit: <https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/>

About the National Nutrition Foundation

National Nutrition Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that enables Australians to enjoy nutritious foods and drinks. We promote credible, evidence-based, and practical information through collaborations with governments, organisations, and communities to amplify our message, and build the capacity to create healthier food environments. For more information, visit: <https://nationalnutritionfoundation.org.au/>

Further background:

Australia is considered the allergy capital of the world with 1 in 10 babies having a confirmed food allergy in Australia and approximately 1 in 50 babies having a milk (dairy) allergy.

Below are key findings from the needs analysis conducted by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service:

Long day care services

- Tight budget and staff shortages is leading to role sharing and utilisation of an inexperienced workforce including for food preparation
- Insufficient professional development, relating to managing complex food requirements, available for new and experienced staff
- Have difficulty upskilling new and temporary staff in the role of cook

Cooks

- Have inadequate time, budget, and capacity to perform their role
- Find it burdensome to meet allergy requirements while providing a nutritious menu

Capacity building

- Experienced cooks report a lack of professional development to extend their knowledge and capabilities beyond the basics
- Cooks need more culturally diverse resources to support their menu planning and meet the needs of children with cultural dietary requirements

Resources

- Desire to access practical resources that are directly related to work with real-life examples all in one place

ⁱ Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2022