

Many restaurant staff are undertrained and misinformed about food allergies

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A new study published in *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* reveals that there is no association between a restaurant worker's knowledge of food allergy and his or her confidence in being able to provide a safe meal to a food allergic customer.

Food allergies are common, affecting 2% of adults and as much as 8% of children in the UK alone. Allergic reactions can cause a wide variety of symptoms, the most serious being anaphylaxis, which can cause death.

Led by Professor Helen Smith of Brighton & Sussex Medical School, UK, researchers telephoned 90 table-service restaurants in Brighton to assess staff knowledge of food allergy and determine how comfortable they felt providing meals to food allergic customers.

Responses demonstrate apparent gaps in restaurant staff's knowledge of food allergy. In one out of three kitchens, common food allergens (e.g. eggs, peanuts, wheat, milk, nuts, fish) were not separated from other foods. One in five staff members thought that an allergic customer consuming a small amount of allergen would be safe, as would removing the allergen from a finished meal (e.g. picking the nuts off a pre-prepared desert would render it safe for a nut-allergic customer to eat).

Only one third of respondents had received any sort of food allergy training, but nonetheless 80% reported confidence in providing a safe meal for their food-allergic customers.

"Diners who are food allergic must remain vigilant and not assume restaurants are safe or that all staff are knowledgeable about [food allergy](#) ," Smith notes. "Our survey supports the need for more rigorous and accessible training if food-allergic customers are to avoid being put at risk by dining out."

Provided by Wiley

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