



10 May 2010

## Assume nothing when it comes to food allergy

**Food Allergy Awareness Week May 16 – 22, 2010**

Making assumptions about food allergies can be just as dangerous as not checking your parachute before skydiving or trusting your safety harness is working before rock climbing. With severe allergies on the rise, no one can afford to make assumptions about food allergies.

That's why this Food Allergy Awareness Week (May 16 – 22), Anaphylaxis Australia is urging sufferers and the entire community to assume nothing when it comes to food allergies.

"Assumptions by a sufferer that they'll be okay and won't need their life saving medication, local restaurant staff assuming there are no nuts in a menu item, or doctors assuming that patients with a food allergy understand the full extent of their condition, can all have tragic consequences," said Maria Said, President of Anaphylaxis Australia. "Assumptions or inactions often lead to avoidable reactions or even fatalities."

"Findings and recommendations of the recent WA coroner's enquiry into the death of 20 year old Kylie Lynch are due to be released by mid 2010. While the coroner's findings of this inquest are yet to be handed down, we know from past inquests that a chain of events contributed to a lack of awareness and understanding at many levels. With no apparent cure for food allergy, education of family, friends, health professionals and those in the food service sector is crucial to preventing serious reactions and saving lives," she added.

Food allergens such as peanuts, shellfish, soy or milk are often not obvious in menu items or packaged foods, even after a visual inspection. Anaphylaxis Australia strongly recommends sufferers read food labels, carefully and clearly disclose all allergies to food service staff before asking for ingredients in a menu item, and most importantly, always carry their life-saving adrenaline auto-injector and Action Plan for Anaphylaxis (emergency plan) with them at all times.

"We have seen allergens such as nuts added to foods where you'd least expect to find them, including mashed potato, rissoles or even spaghetti bolognese," said Ms Said. "While it is impossible to create a completely allergen-free environment, people need to stop making assumptions about food and communicate more clearly to help people at risk navigate their way to safer choices."

To help the food industry better understand food allergies and how to create and maintain a safer environment for their patrons, Anaphylaxis Australia had developed a Food Service kit which is available to order from their website [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au). The kit includes an interactive CD Rom, posters, allergen cards, fridge magnet and an informative, easy to understand booklet that explains Australian food laws and how facilities might reduce risk in their service.

"Awareness, education and training are all vital in keeping those with severe food allergies safe – and it takes effort from the whole community," said Ms Said. "Most of all, we urge all suffers to never assume they will be safe. Carry your life-saving medication with you at all times, ensure it is within its expiry date and make certain that you, and those around you, know how to use it correctly."

---

**Anaphylaxis Australia Inc** is a non-profit Australian charity which was formed in 1993. AAI's mission is to increase awareness of anaphylaxis through education, research and support. The organisation works with health and teaching professionals, members of the food industry and all who are touched by life-threatening allergy so that, together, we can improve the quality of life of Australians with allergies, nationally. For more information visit the AAI website: [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au) or call 1300 728 000

### For further information contact:

Jodie Wrigley  
Growing Daily Communications  
Tel: (02) 9969 5511 [Jodie@growingdaily.com.au](mailto:Jodie@growingdaily.com.au)