The Growing Concern Around Allergens: Protecting Your Customers

Mike Spigler, MCHES
VP of Education
Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)

Conference on Food Protection
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About Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)

- The leading national nonprofit working on behalf of the 15 million Americans with food allergies.

- Formed in October 2012 between the merger of the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) and the Food Allergy Initiative (FAI).

- FARE’s mission is to ensure the safety and inclusion of individuals with food allergies while relentlessly seeking a cure.
What is a Food Allergy?

- Eight foods make up 90% of all food allergy reactions:
  - Peanut
  - Tree nuts
  - Milk
  - Egg
  - Wheat
  - Soy
  - Fish
  - Shellfish
Food Allergy is a Serious Public Health Issue...

15 million Americans with food allergies
Includes

5.9 million children (1 in 13)
Prevalence is Growing

- The prevalence of food allergies appears to be on the rise:
  
  - According to a 2008 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there was about an 18 percent increase in food allergy seen between 1997 and 2007
  
  - The prevalence of peanut allergy among children appears to have tripled between 1997 and 2008

- In addition, more than 30 percent of children with a food allergy have multiple food allergies
Why is the Prevalence Growing?

Several unproven theories:

- Hygiene hypothesis
- Pre-natal diet/breastfeeding
- Antibiotic use
- Reporting bias
- GMOs
Food Allergies Can Be Life-Threatening

- Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that comes on quickly and may cause death
- Every 3 minutes a food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency department
- That equates to 203,000 visits to the emergency room each year – most are due to accidental exposure
- Past reactions do not predict future reactions – so it is important to be prepared with an epinephrine auto-injector, if prescribed
Current Research into Treatments

- FARE supports a number of clinical trials at prestigious institutions across the country that are exploring promising treatments, but these are still under study and not approved for use outside a research setting.

- Three treatments being studied:
  - Oral Immunotherapy (OIT)
  - Sublingual Immunotherapy (SLIT)
  - Food Allergy Herbal Formula 2 (FAHF-2)
FARE Programs

- In addition to our research, our other programs include:
  - Food Allergy Awareness Week (May 12-18)
  - Food Allergy Conferences
  - School Food Allergy Programs: Safe@School, AllergyReady.com
  - Teen Programs: Teen Summit, Teen Advisory Group (TAG)
FARE Programs

- Other programs include:
  - Food Industry Day
    - Monday, October 7, 2013
    - Hyatt Dulles Hotel in Herndon, VA

- Advocacy Initiatives
  - Stock epinephrine
  - EMT carry/use
  - FDA:
    - Thresholds
    - Preventive Controls
FDA

Thresholds

• Looking at whether it is possible to safely establish threshold levels for major allergens.

• Pros:
  ▪ Clearer direction for industry
  ▪ Less confusion with “may contain” labels

• Cons:
  ▪ No set amount of safe allergen level is known due to widely varying levels of allergenicity.
  ▪ Informed choice is very important to our membership and 65% said they would not buy products even if they could be assured the level would not cause a reaction.
FDA

- Preventive Controls
  - Would improve food safety by reducing the risks from all hazards in manufactured food, including food allergens.
  - Part of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (2011)
  - Specific requirements for preventing the unintended presence of allergens.
    - Reducing risks of cross-contact
    - Reducing recalled from undeclared food allergens
  - Companies would have 1 year after it is published in the Federal Register.
  - Comment period will close on September 16.
ServSafe Allergen Awareness Training Program

- Committee Formed in December, 2012
  - Committee members include professionals from corporate food service, restaurants, independent food allergy trainers, physicians and non-profit organizations
  - Some of the companies represented included Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, Chic-Fil-A, Sodexo and the Celiac Foundation. FARE was represented by two staff members, Joel Schaffer (formerly of Disney) and Steve Taylor, who is a member of the FARE Medical Advisory Board.
ServSafe Allergen Awareness Training Program

- Program categories include:
  - Food allergy fundamentals
  - Purchasing, receiving & storing food
  - Preparing & delivering food
  - Customer communication
  - Emergency preparedness
Food Allergy Fundamentals

- What is a food allergy
  - Difference between an allergy & an intolerance
  - Common symptoms and reactions
    - What is anaphylaxis
- What are the “Big 8”?
- How to read a label
  - Laws surrounding labeling
  - How do laws differ between retail and wholesale
Purchasing, Receiving and Storing Food

- How do you vet suppliers
- How to unload food to avoid cross contact
  - Inspect truck and boxes for broken packages or possible spillage
- How to store food to avoid cross contact
  - Designate specific locations for foods containing allergens
  - Carefully label items to avoid confusion
Preparing and Delivering Food

- Cleaning and sanitizing
  - Kitchen surfaces
  - Dishware, flatware, utensils & equipment
  - Tables & Chairs
  - Staff
    - Wash hands, change gloves, change towels, etc.

- Segregate Cooking Equipment
  - Designated pans, cutting boards, knives, etc.

- Meal Completion
  - Meal should be designated as allergen-free and steps must be taken to avoid cross-contact once it leaves the kitchen
Customer Communications

- How to respond to questions
  - Can you accommodate my needs?
  - What policies do you have regarding food allergies?
- How to explain what a restaurant is capable of doing
  - What items on the menu can I eat?
    - What are the ingredients?
    - Can I see the label?
  - What substitutions can you make?
  - How do you avoid cross contact?
- When should the restaurant involve the manager or chef
Emergency Preparedness

- How to identify if a person is having an allergic reaction
- What to do when an allergic reaction occurs
  - Call 911, explain that a person is having an allergic reaction
  - Confirm that the ambulance is carrying epinephrine and that there will be a first-responder on the scene that can administer epi
Program Delivery

- The NRA and FARE are working on PR strategies including targeted mailings, press releases and speaking engagements to promote the program

- The program is expected to be available to restaurants in late summer
FARE Tools

- FARE is developing additional tools for restaurants and customers
- Restaurant Tools and Resources on Website
  - Sample policies
  - Best practices for customer communication
  - Emergency Action Plan
  - Menu suggestions
- Customer Tools and Resources on Website
  - Food Allergy Card
  - Steps on how to identify an appropriate restaurant and how to have a safe dining experience
  - Webinar with Chef Joel Schaefer
Other Restaurant Resources in Progress

- Searchable database for trained restaurants
- Mobile app to search for trained restaurants
- Window sticker indicating that restaurants have been trained
- PSA Campaign (tv, radio and print)
  - Emphasizing the importance of the restaurant/customer communication in ensuring a safe experience
For More Information

FARE

www.foodallergy.org

Mike Spigler, MCHES

mspigler@foodallergy.org

703-563-3059