

Empowered Adults in the Workplace

Managing Food Allergies in the Work Environment

TEAL Tactics on how to keep the conversation crucial and casual:

1. Discuss your food allergies and the seriousness during an orientation period. Or sooner if possible. (i.e. as you introduce yourself in the office, orientation, business meetings).
2. Show your coworkers where your epinephrine auto-injectors are located and how to administer it in case of an emergency.
3. Identify at least three, trustworthy co-workers that will administer epinephrine in case of emergency.
4. Confirm what your internal procedures are if you have an anaphylactic reaction and what to do.
5. Explain your [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan](#) in detail and ask if they have any questions.
6. Explain what your [symptoms](#) may look like to your co-workers.
7. Make sure you explain the importance of [cross-contact](#) (i.e. Keurig machine "hazelnut k-cups", microwave, kitchen utensils/sponge, etc.).
8. If there is miscommunication and an incident occurs, take immediate action and address the concern; reiterate the importance of knowledge and the circumstances. Offer to re-educate your team on food allergies and how to keep you safe.
9. Offer to bring in snacks or baked goods for office parties so that you can enjoy them as well!
10. Feel free to share your allergen-friendly treats with a co-worker who's having a craving!
11. Consider calling the restaurant when ordering take-out food or if something is being catered. Consider speaking directly to the chef.
12. Respectfully say "no thank you, I have food allergies, but thank you for thinking of me" when needed.
13. Use caution when food is unlabeled. No label = do not eat it.
14. Always keep safe food available, so you never feel left out.

TEAL Tactics when sharing a communal space with co-workers:

1. If you've encountered resistance, consult with your direct report about what is occurring after you've had the conversation about keeping a safe work environment.
2. Offer to lead a department meeting about kitchen etiquette where all are free to vent/share their opinions. This allows you the opportunity to discuss cross-contact and keeping the common area clean and free-from allergens.
3. Reiterate the importance of cross-contact and how to be cautious of washing items that may contain your allergen.
4. Keep a designated soap, sponge, Keurig, etc. and label them "allergy-free - please respect".
5. Make a dedicated shelf in the fridge an "allergy-free" shelf for those with food allergies.
6. Always label your food and drinks with your name to avoid cross-contact.
7. Request a regular cleaning of your office space, bring cleaning wipes if you're uncomfortable.
8. If the miscommunication continues, contact your Human Resources Department for more information about your civil rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Food allergies affect as many as **32 million Americans**, including **26 million adults**.

Be "Empowered" with these **TEAL Tactics** on how to start and maintain the discussion of **food allergies** in the workplace!

Find out more on managing food allergies as an adult:

<https://www.FoodAllergyAwareness.org/education/adults-with-food-allergies/>