This newsletter is produced by the Nutrition Education Network of Washington to enhance communication and coordination among those who educate Washington families about nutrition and food. Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

**STAFF**
Kathleen Manenica, MS, CN  
Executive Editor  
State Program Coordinator, Food Sense  
253-445-4598  
manenica@wsu.edu

Martha Marino, MA, RD, CD  
Writer  
206-817-1466  
martha_marino@yahoo.com

Christa Albice  
Circulation Services  
253-445-4541  
albice@wsu.edu

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To access past issues, go to http://nutrition.wsu.edu/take5/index.html

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Your opinions are valuable! Please take a few minutes to provide your input. We survey readers biennially to assure the Energize Newsletter is meeting both your needs and ours. All information is confidential. Please click on the following link to complete the survey: http://surveygoldplus.com/s/B1E6BC6A5BAA4BEC/31.htm.

Only those completing the electronic survey will continue to receive subsequent issues. Thanks—and we look forward to receiving your input.

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**This Month’s Focus—Food Allergies 101**

Nutrition educators have noticed an increasing number of people we serve who suffer from food allergies. Why do food allergies matter to nutrition educators? When conducting a class or doing a food demonstration, we may inadvertently expose adults and kids to allergens, which could have serious consequences. Scientists estimate that one in 25 Americans, or as many as 15 million people suffer from food allergies, including about six million children. There are no cures for food allergies and each year, food allergies account for 30,000 visits to the emergency room and more than 200 deaths.

Those of us who work with or serve the public need a basic understanding of what food allergies are, sources of allergens, and ways we can help protect others from unintended exposure. In this issue of Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators, we provide a basic understanding of food allergies. This is a complex topic; therefore many professionals have contributed, including Sandy Brown, Washington State University (WSU) Extension Clark County, Margaret Viebrock, WSU Extension Douglas County, Karen Barale, Washington State University (WSU) Extension Pierce County and Beverly Kindblade, Seattle Nutrition.

The information in this particular issue of Energize is not clinically oriented but rather serves as basic background. We provide selected websites below that could be used for further information.

**Food Allergies: Fundamentals for Food and Nutrition Educators**—In her clinical practice, Registered Dietitian Beverly (Beve) Kindblade sees many clients with food allergies. Energize Newsletter interviewed her about the basics of food allergies and what nutrition educators should know. When explaining the difference between food allergy and food intolerance, Beve said that food allergy is a medical condition that results from the body’s immune response after exposure to a specific food. Symptoms of allergy can be immediate or delayed and can vary from hives, eczema, skin itching or rashes, asthma, and runny nose to life-threatening anaphylaxis with swelling of the tongue or face. Although a person can have an allergy to any food, 90% of verified reactions are to eight foods: wheat (gluten), cow milk, soy, peanuts, tree nuts (e.g. cashews, almonds, coconut, walnuts, hazelnuts), fish (e.g. bass, cod, flounder), and shellfish (e.g. crab, lobster, shrimp). In contrast, food intolerance is a response to a food that is not from the immune system. These reactions can be related to an enzyme deficiency, such as lactase among people who are intolerant to lactose, the sugar naturally found in milk. Symptoms of intolerance can include diarrhea, headache, gas and bloating. Beve cautions that eliminating foods from the diet due to food allergy or intolerance can lead to malnutrition and that decreased intakes of B-vitamins, calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, and vitamin D are common.
Beve was asked what nutrition educators should know about potential hazards, particularly when conducting a class or food demo, and offered these suggestions:

- Become familiar with the eight most common foods that cause allergic reactions. Consider recipes that use alternative ingredients.
- Be careful not to cross-contaminate foods that you use in your demonstration. For instance, change gloves after handling fresh bakery items, since they may contain gluten, eggs, dairy, soy tree nuts and/or peanuts.
- Because potential food allergens can be found in refined and processed foods as flavoring agents, stabilizers, filler ingredients, preservatives, and additives, use simple foods in your demonstration when possible.
- Provide an ingredient list or label for the items to be tasted.
- When teaching participants to read ingredient labels on foods, point out that there are many ingredients that have more than one name. Give an example of XXX (someone who wants to avoid milk should look for XXX).
- If a participant needs medical guidance, refer them to their physician or a Registered Dietitian (RD) for issues related to food and health. The RD will assess nutritional status and refer clients to appropriate doctors for intervention and treatment.

(Contact: Beverly Kindblade, MS, RD, CD, Nutritionist/Dietitian, Seattle Nutrition, 206-920-7676, beve@SeattleNutrition.com)

**Food Allergies: Guidelines for Food Facilities** – There are consistencies in food allergy guidelines between community nutrition programming and food facilities like restaurants. WSU Extension faculty Sandy Brown and Margaret Viebrock attended a useful training through the Washington Restaurant Association called “Spot Check: Allergy Safe Certification.” They offer these tips used in restaurants to help prevent people with food allergies from experiencing a reaction: Please note that these suggestions may be outside the scope of work for SNAP-Ed educators who should check with their supervisors with any questions.

- Educate clients about the eight allergens (mentioned above). Although they are required to be identified in plain language on food labels, they appear under many names. For example, other names for milk could be caramel or high protein flavin; other names for eggs could be binder, emulsifier, or marzipan.
- In food facilities (such as restaurants), develop a set of policies and procedures to handle customers with food allergies. Have one person attend to such customers, suggesting menu options that they know would accommodate the person with the food allergy and ensuring that there is no cross-contamination of food or preparation mistakes. Be aware that food vapor can contaminate food, such as a shellfish stew sitting under a heat lamp next to an allergic person’s entrée. Wash hands before serving someone with a food allergy, carrying only their food. Do not offer crayons, after-dinner mints, or sweets that come from a public supply in order to eliminate contact with food residue from unwashed hands.
- Call 911 if a client has an allergic reaction, and then let emergency services do their work.

For more information about the training, see [http://warestaurant.org/training-education/allergy-certification](http://warestaurant.org/training-education/allergy-certification). (Contacts: Sandy Brown, WSU Extension Clark County, 360-397-6060 ext. 5700, browns@wsu.edu and Margaret Viebrock, WSU Extension Douglas County, 509-745-8531, viebrock@wsu.edu)

**What to Do at Camp and School** – The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) offers an array of free downloadable handouts about food allergies that are useful for classroom teachers and administrators, parents, caregivers, camp staff, and others at [www.foodallergy.org/section/helpful-information](http://www.foodallergy.org/section/helpful-information). FAAN also provides helpful descriptions the eight most common foods causing allergic reactions, how to avoid them, and unexpected foods in which they might be found (such as peanut in pesto and eggs in pretzels) at [www.foodallergy.org/section/allergens](http://www.foodallergy.org/section/allergens).

**Sources of Helpful Information about Food Allergies:**

- Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (mentioned above) provides information tailored to restaurants, schools, and health professionals at [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org).
- To help combat misperceptions about food allergies, the University of Nebraska Lincoln offers a list of common myths and facts at [http://food.unl.edu/web/allergy/myths-faqs](http://food.unl.edu/web/allergy/myths-faqs).
- Useful tips for food service, restaurant, and other facilities serving the public is provided by the National Restaurant Association at [www.restaurant.org/foodhealthyliving/safety/allergies](http://www.restaurant.org/foodhealthyliving/safety/allergies).

*Listing of products and goods in this newsletter does not imply endorsement.*
**Allergy Bullying** – Sad to say, but some kids use food as a weapon against other kids who have food allergies. In the current issue of the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers report that nearly one-third of children with food allergies say they have been bullied or harassed specifically due to their food allergies. The taunting classmates use foods containing the allergen to threaten children, such as having food thrown at them. Only half of their parents were aware of the bullying. (Source: Shemesh E et al, “Child and parental reports of bullying in a consecutive sample of children with food allergy.” *Pediatrics*, 131(1):e10-e17, January 2013, [http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/12/19/peds.2012-1180.full.pdf+html](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/12/19/peds.2012-1180.full.pdf+html).

**Asthma: Does Diet Make a Difference?** People who have allergies often also have asthma. Asthma is the most prevalent chronic illness in children, and its incidence among kids is on the rise, as is the incidence of food allergies. Although the causes are unknown and research is being conducted to find out why, the current advice is to breastfeed babies, and for older children and adults to consume a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, get regular physical activity, and maintain a healthy weight to reduce risks for asthma. (Source: Firnhaber JM and KM Kolasa, “Does diet have a connection with asthma?” *Nutrition Today*, 47(2):58-62, March/April 2012.)

**TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

**Dietary Guidelines Messaging Calendar** – When consumers are repeatedly hit with consistent messages, they're more likely to change behavior. That's the thinking behind USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP). In December 2012, CNPP released its message calendar for 2013-2015 to unify messaging among its partners and others who do nutrition education. This calendar includes timed releases of consumer messages that target key behaviors in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines: foods to increase, foods to reduce, and balancing calories. For the calendar and sample ways to implement the messages, see [www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/MyPlate/CommunicationsMessageCalendar.pdf](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/MyPlate/CommunicationsMessageCalendar.pdf).

**Webinar: Hungry and Overweight** – Some people are baffled that overweight children can suffer from hunger. In a webinar by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, speakers will explain this apparent conundrum. Presenters are Meg Bruening, PhD, MPH, RD, from Arizona State University, and Katie Harr, MPH from Feeding America. The webinar is February 26 and is free to members of the Academy: [www.eatright.org/Foundation/content.aspx?id=6442474297&terms=%22hungry+and+overweight%22](http://www.eatright.org/Foundation/content.aspx?id=6442474297&terms=%22hungry+and+overweight%22). The live webinar is available to members of the Academy; the recorded webinar will be available at no charge to non-members at [www.eatright.org/foundation](http://www.eatright.org/foundation).

**LOCAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS**

**Strategies to Promote Health among Young Children** – Registration is open now for an April 3rd conference at the Seattle Center, "Healthy habits for healthy kids: Practical approaches to preventing childhood obesity." Nutrition First is coordinating the event designed for providers working with the preschool population and families with young children, such as WIC providers, early learning childcare providers, and health care practitioners. Keynote speakers include Margo Wootan from the Center for Science in the Public Interest and Dayle Hayes, nutrition educator. For the full agenda and registration information, see [http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e6uz0pbq6161a233&llr=ttz888iab](http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e6uz0pbq6161a233&llr=ttz888iab). For information about Nutrition First, go to [www.nutritionfirstwa.org](http://www.nutritionfirstwa.org) (Contact: Kristen Rezabek, Nutrition First, 206-450-6139).

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Fresh fruit is the Number One snack in America! Believe it or not, the market research firm NPD found that fruit is tops in its report, *Snacking in America*. NPD found that Americans snacked on fresh fruit an average of 10 times more than they snacked on chocolate and 25 times more than they snacked on potato chips. Why fruit? NPD experts suggest these reasons: fruit can be eaten many times during the day (mid-morning, afternoon, dessert), fruit has more appeal to Americans who are trying to eat more healthfully, and people who eat healthy snacks also eat snacks overall so they may be eating additional fruit. Perhaps nutrition educators can bask in some of the credit for this positive dietary change! (Source: *Snacking in America 2012* by NPD Group.)