

Managing food allergies

Information for patients, parents and guardians

Managing food allergies can be daunting, especially when eating out or shopping for food. This factsheet contains advice to help your child be prepared, stay safe and live well with food allergies. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our allergy team.

Shopping for food

All packaged foods you buy in tins, packets or jars in the UK must have a full list of ingredients on the label. Make sure you read the ingredients list every time, as the recipes and ingredients can change. There are apps that can help you to do this, such as FoodMaestro and Spoon Guru.

A food can be known by several names. It is important that you get to know all the different names of foods to which your child is allergic.

Food that is not prepacked, for example food that comes from a delicatessen, a bakery, an ice cream van or a salad bar, is at risk of cross contamination, so it is best to avoid these.

Cross contamination happens when a food that supposedly does not contain a certain food allergen accidentally comes into contact with the food allergen in the supply chain, on a work surface or from cutlery.

Many supermarkets sell 'free from' products. It is important to read the ingredients label carefully before giving these foods to your child, as the product may not be free from all the food your child is allergic to.

Eating out and ordering takeaways

Plan ahead

Telephone the restaurant or hotel in advance to tell them about your child's food allergy. Make sure they are aware that your child can not have any dishes that may contain the allergen. Ask them if they can provide a separate dish, free from the allergen.

Explain the risks

Make it clear how serious the allergy can be. When you arrive, speak to a senior staff member or the chef.

Do not take risks

Do not be afraid to leave the restaurant if you are uncertain or do not think they have put allergy controls in place.

Be particularly careful at salad bars and buffets where food can be easily cross contaminated.

Ordering food

As they get older, encourage your child to know their allergies, and ask about allergies when offered food or when ordering food in a restaurant.

Allow your child to order food for themselves while you are able to supervise and support them.

Parties

Contact the person having the party to let them know about your child's food allergy. Make sure they are aware that your child can not have any food that may contain the allergen.

When you arrive at the party, remind the person providing the food which food your child is allergic to and check that it is not contained in any of the dishes that will be offered.

Your child should be very careful at buffet parties where food can be cross contaminated (on plates and cutlery). Younger children might prefer to take their own food with them to the party. This will mean your child knows that what they are eating is safe and, so long as they do not touch the main party food, they can enjoy themselves like everyone else.

How to use your child's adrenaline auto injector

We recommend that you, your child and your family refresh your skills on a regular basis and practice with your child's auto injector trainer. This could be done at the beginning of each school term.

Videos about how to use your child's adrenaline auto injector can be found on the company websites below:

- www.epipen.co.uk
- www.jext.co.uk
- www.emerade-bausch.co.uk

Be prepared

Your child should carry their rescue medicines (antihistamine and adrenaline auto injector) with them at all times. Make sure your child's friends, family and school know what to do if they have an allergic reaction.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our children's allergy team.

Clinic

Telephone: **023 8120 4335**

Day ward

Telephone: **023 8120 4511**

Email: childrensallergy@uhs.nhs.uk

Website: www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrensallergy

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**

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