

Food allergens and food intolerance



When someone consumes food or an ingredient in food that they have an allergy or intolerance to they may experience a mild to severe physical reaction, depending on the individual and the severity of their allergy or intolerance.

Symptoms can range from sore eyes, runny or blocked nose and swelling of the lips to sickness and diarrhoea and potentially a fatal anaphylactic shock.

People who have an allergy or intolerance to certain foods or ingredients are extremely careful about what they eat and they will not knowingly consume such food or food containing certain ingredients. However, if the item is hidden or its presence is not declared this could have serious health consequences for them.

In the UK more than a million people suffer from food allergies.

Are you protecting your customers from the health risks associated with food allergies?

Food businesses are required to provide allergy information on prepacked foods and with non-prepacked foods such as those sold by catering outlets, delicatessens, butchers, bakeries and sandwich makers.

There are 14 food allergens that must be declared (see over). There are different ways that you can provide allergen information. You can either give allergen information on your menu, or on a ticket, label or notice, or you can tell your customers where they can get allergen information from – for example by displaying a sign saying *'Food Allergies and Intolerances: Before you order your food please speak to our staff if you want to know about our ingredients'*.

Allergen information or where it can be obtained must also be included on any website you use to sell your foods.

If you provide a catering service, including buffets, you must provide allergen information with the food – such as on a label attached to the food, or on a notice, menu or ticket which the consumer can easily see.

To help you identify and record the allergens that are found in your foods you should create a list of your dishes and highlight what allergens are in them. This can then be used by staff to answer customer questions about allergens. The list must be accurate and be kept up to date. If there are any changes to menu items, raw ingredients, bought-in-goods or methods of food preparation, these must be reflected in your allergens record.

14 Allergens

Coming to a food label near you



The way allergens are labelled on prepacked foods is changing because of new regulations. The Food Information Regulation, which comes into force in December 2014, introduces a requirement that food businesses must provide information about the allergenic ingredients used in any food they sell or provide.

There are 14 major allergens which need to be mentioned (either on a label or through provided information such as menus) when they are used as ingredients in a food. Here are the allergens, and some examples of where they can be found:

1	Celery This includes celery stalks, leaves, seeds and the root called celeriac. You can find celery in celery salt, salads, some meat products, soups and stock cubes.	
2	Cereals containing gluten Wheat (such as spelt and Khorasan wheat/Kamut), rye, barley and oats is often found in foods containing flour, such as some types of baking powder, batter, breadcrumbs, bread, cakes, couscous, meat products, pasta, pastry, sauces, soups and fried foods which are dusted with flour.	
3	Crustaceans Crabs, lobster, prawns and scampi are crustaceans. Shrimp paste, often used in Thai and south-east Asian curries or salads, is an ingredient to look out for.	
4	Eggs Eggs are often found in cakes, some meat products, mayonnaise, mousses, pasta, quiche, sauces and pastries or foods brushed or glazed with egg.	
5	Fish You will find this in some fish sauces, pizzas, relishes, salad dressings, stock cubes and Worcestershire sauce.	
6	Lupin Yes, lupin is a flower, but it's also found in flour! Lupin flour and seeds can be used in some types of bread, pastries and even in pasta.	
7	Milk Milk is a common ingredient in butter, cheese, cream, milk powders and yoghurt. It can also be found in foods brushed or glazed with milk, and in powdered soups and sauces.	
8	Molluscs These include mussels, land snails, squid and whelks, but can also be commonly found in oyster sauce or as an ingredient in fish stews	
9	Mustard Liquid mustard, mustard powder and mustard seeds fall into this category. This ingredient can also be found in breads, curries, marinades, meat products, salad dressings, sauces and soups.	
10	Nuts Not to be mistaken with peanuts (which are actually a legume and grow underground), this ingredient refers to nuts which grow on trees, like cashew nuts, almonds and hazelnuts. You can find nuts in breads, biscuits, crackers, desserts, nut powders (often used in Asian curries), stir-fried dishes, ice cream, marzipan (almond paste), nut oils and sauces.	
11	Peanuts Peanuts are actually a legume and grow underground, which is why it's sometimes called a groundnut. Peanuts are often used as an ingredient in biscuits, cakes, curries, desserts, sauces (such as satay sauce), as well as in groundnut oil and peanut flour.	
12	Sesame seeds These seeds can often be found in bread (sprinkled on hamburger buns for example), breadsticks, houmous, sesame oil and tahini. They are sometimes toasted and used in salads.	
13	Soya Often found in bean curd, edamame beans, miso paste, textured soya protein, soya flour or tofu, soya is a staple ingredient in oriental food. It can also be found in desserts, ice cream, meat products, sauces and vegetarian products.	
14	Sulphur dioxide (sometimes known as sulphites) This is an ingredient often used in dried fruit such as raisins, dried apricots and prunes. You might also find it in meat products, soft drinks, vegetables as well as in wine and beer. If you have asthma, you have a higher risk of developing a reaction to sulphur dioxide.	

For more information, visit: food.gov.uk/allergy or nhs.uk/conditions/allergies

Sign up to our allergy alerts on food.gov.uk/email, or follow #AllergyAlert on Twitter and Facebook

Let's keep connected at food.gov.uk/facebook

Join our conversation @[food.gov.uk/twitter](https://twitter.com/foodgovuk)

Watch us on food.gov.uk/youtube

Keep your customers safe from food allergens.

Keep an up to date list of your foods and what allergens they contain. Always refer to the list when asked about ingredients.

Keep up-to-date ingredients information for any ready-made foods that you buy in. If there is no labelling information, your supplier must tell you what allergens the food contains. You can then pass this information on to your customer.

When making your list of allergens check all ingredients including any added sauces, toppings, dressings and garnishes. Also check what oil was used – it may be made using an allergen eg. sesame oil or nuts.

If you change the ingredients of a food, make sure you update your ingredients information and tell your staff about the change.

If someone asks you to make some food for them that does not contain a particular allergen, don't say yes unless you can make sure that absolutely none of the allergen will be in the food.

If you're making food for someone with an allergy, make sure work surfaces and equipment have been thoroughly cleaned, and wash your hands thoroughly before preparing that food.

Provide allergy awareness training to all of your staff – free online training is available at <http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk>