

Producing and sharing allergen information: *A guide for schools and school caterers in England*

Introduction

New allergen labelling requirements were introduced in December 2014. This guide outlines the changes and provides support to help you meet them.

The new requirements

The new legislation requires food businesses including restaurants, cafes, hospitals, schools and early years settings providing non-prepacked food to provide allergen ingredients information. These requirements are part of the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulations¹, and apply across the EU. They are enforced in the UK by the Food Information Regulations 2014.²

Why it is important to provide allergen information?

In the UK, it is estimated that around 2 million people (1-2% of adults and 5-8% of children) have a food allergy.³ This is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to a specific food, because it mistakenly perceives it as a threat, and a reaction can be produced by just a tiny amount of a food.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction to food can include:

- Itching in the mouth, throat and/or ears, a raised itchy red rash (hives)
- Swelling of the face, around the eyes, lips, tongue and roof of the mouth and vomiting
- In the most serious cases, a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis, which can include breathing difficulties, light headedness and feeling like you are going to faint) can be life-threatening. This reaction is less common than those above.

There is no known cure for food allergies. People with allergies need to avoid the foods to which they are allergic. To do this, they need accurate information about the allergens that are present in food - whether prepacked, or provided by a school or other food business. Schools have a duty of care to their pupils, and must make arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions.⁴ It is important that a process is put in place to safeguard pupils with special dietary requirements, for example ensuring that pupils are identified by staff, and given food that is safe for them to eat.

¹ EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation 1169/2011: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:304:0018:0063:EN:PDF>

² The Food Information Regulations 2014: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukksi/2014/1855/contents/made

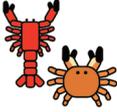
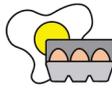
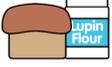
³ Food Standards Agency (2015). Food allergen labelling and information requirements under the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation No. 1169/2011: Technical guidance:

www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/food-allergen-labelling-technical-guidance.pdf

⁴ Children and Families Act 2014: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/100/enacted

The main 14 food allergens

Food businesses need to be able to explain to their customers which of the main 14 allergens are included as an ingredient in the foods they provide. These allergens are the ones which people across Europe are most commonly allergic or intolerant to. The table below lists the allergens which need to be declared, and examples of foods in which they are commonly found.

<p>Celery</p> 	<p>This includes celery stalks, leaves and seeds and celeriac.</p> <p>Celery is often found in celery salt, soups and stock cubes</p>	<p>Molluscs</p> 	<p>These include oyster, octopus, squid, cockles, mussels, winkles, scallops and snails. They can also be found in fish sauce.</p>
<p>Cereals containing gluten: wheat, rye, barley and oats</p> 	<p>These are often found in flour, bread, cakes and biscuits, pasta, couscous and breakfast cereals, pastry, sauces, breaded or battered products, batters, soups and stock cubes.</p> <p>You should declare the individual cereal (e.g. wheat), and can choose whether to also mention gluten.</p>	<p>Mustard</p> 	<p>This includes mustard seeds, powder and liquid mustard of all types.</p> <p>It is often found in marinades, dressings, sauces, soups and meat products.</p>
<p>Crustaceans</p> 	<p>These include prawns, crab, lobster, crayfish and scampi.</p>	<p>Nuts</p> 	<p>This includes almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio, cashew and macadamia (Queensland) nuts.</p> <p>These can be found in nut butters, biscuits and desserts, marzipan, nut oils and sauces.</p> <p>You should declare the individual nut (e.g. almond).</p>
<p>Eggs</p> 	<p>These include eggs from chickens, ducks and other birds.</p> <p>Egg is often found in cakes, desserts, mayonnaise, meat products, some pasta, battered and crumbed products, ice cream and sauces as well as egg dishes such as quiche and omelette.</p>	<p>Peanuts</p> 	<p>These can be found in biscuits, cakes, sauces and in peanut oil.</p>
<p>Fish</p> 	<p>This includes all white and oily fish e.g. cod, plaice, pollock, salmon, pilchards, sardines and tuna.</p> <p>This is often found in fish sauces, relishes and Worcestershire sauce.</p>	<p>Sesame</p> 	<p>This can be found in sesame seeds, powder, oil, tahini, houmous, breadsticks and bread.</p>
<p>Lupin</p> 	<p>This includes lupin seeds and flour and can be found in types of bread, pastries and pasta.</p>	<p>Soybeans</p> 	<p>This includes soya included within soy sauce, textured vegetable protein and soya mince, soya flour, soya milk, tofu, and some bread products.</p>
<p>Milk</p> 	<p>This includes milk from cows, sheep, goats and other mammals, milk proteins (casein and whey) and milk products (including lactose).</p> <p>Found in cream, butter, yoghurt and fromage frais, fat spreads, crème fraîche, ice cream, soups, sauces and stock cubes.</p>	<p>Sulphur Dioxide or sulphites</p> 	<p>This is often used as a preservative in dried fruit, meat products, soft drinks and canned beans.</p>

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Compiling, displaying and communicating allergen information

1. Make sure you have up to date and accurate written information about the food you provide e.g.
 - Menu which lists the food provided at each outlet across the day
 - Full set of standard recipes listing all ingredients.

2. Check each ingredient you use to see whether each one contains any of the 14 allergens listed on page 2. You can find this information:
 - On the product packaging of most prepacked products. Since December 2014, prepacked foods have been required to highlight the presence of allergens in the ingredients list e.g. **using bold text**⁵
 - Listed on product specifications provided by suppliers
 - By contacting your suppliers and requesting allergen information.

Keep ingredients information for bought in products so you can refer back to them if needed.

3. Use your standard recipes and the allergen information for the ingredients you use to list the allergens included in each recipe. You can record this information on the recipes, or in a separate document (e.g. a menu matrix).

4. Decide how to provide allergen information for the food you provide. This needs to be easily accessible for consumers, so that pupils and parents know where to access the information if required:
 - You can include written allergen information on a menu, chalkboard, website or information pack/folder
 - If the information isn't provided upfront, you will need to signpost where it can be obtained from (as written or verbal information)
 - If the information is provided verbally by staff, there must be a process in place to ensure the information given is correct, consistent and verifiable.

5. Make sure that the food you provide reflects the written allergen information, by:
 - Checking that the ingredients delivered are as ordered, and where alternative products are delivered, that the allergen information is checked and updated where necessary, and conveyed to staff
 - Ensuring that catering staff follow the standard recipes using the ingredients stated
 - Having a process in place to update allergen information where recipes or products are changed, or ingredients are reformulated.

6. Make sure all kitchen and serving staff have received appropriate training to ensure they understand where to access allergen information for the menu, and can provide accurate information on request.

7. Make sure suitable measures are taken to prevent allergen cross-contamination during storage, preparation and service by:
 - Storing ingredients in the original containers where possible, and clearly labelling any ingredients which are transferred into different containers
 - Removing or reducing potential cross-contamination which may arise from shared equipment (e.g. serving spoons, chopping boards and woks)
 - Thoroughly cleaning work surfaces and equipment.
 - Thorough hand-washing before preparing food.

⁵ Remember that some products have a long shelf life, so some products may have been packed before December 2014, and so may include allergy information in the old format.

Further advice and resources

- Children's Food Trust webpage on catering for special dietary requirements:
website: www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/specialdiets
- Further information about food allergies is available on the NHS Choices
website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/Pages/Intro1.aspx
- Resources to support food businesses to provide allergen information, and to teach children about food allergies, are available from the Food Standards Agency
website: www.food.gov.uk/allergen-resources
- Online training on food allergies is available on the Food Standards Agency
website: <http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>
- Anaphylaxis Campaign advice on catering for allergies is available from:
website: www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/food-industry/catering-for-allergy---practical-measures
- Allergy UK food allergy information is available from:
website: www.allergyuk.org/food-allergy-menu/food-allergy

If you have specific queries on the requirements of the Food Information Regulations, you can contact your local enforcement agency, which is usually the Trading Standards/Environmental Health department of the Local Authority.

The Children's Food Trust

The Children's Food Trust aims to reduce childhood obesity and malnutrition and enhance educational performance through improving the food our children eat in early years settings, schools and beyond.

We work with health and education commissioners in local authorities, and directly with early years settings, schools, parents and children across the country. We run the UK's biggest network of cooking clubs and, under our previous name of the School Food Trust, we were directly responsible for developing and introducing the national food and nutrition guidelines in both schools and early years settings. We make a difference, and would be pleased to help you too.

Contact us

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