

Managing food allergies: Shopping, Restaurants, Take-aways, Hotels & Parties

Information for patients and carers



Leeds children's
hospital

caring about children

Shopping for food

Most packaged foods you buy in tins, packets or jars have a list of ingredients on the label. Make sure you read labels every time the recipe and ingredients may change.

It is important that you get to know the different names of foods to which you are allergic; for example, peanuts may be referred to as ground nuts on food labels or as arachis in toiletries; cow's milk protein may be labelled as casein. Remember, there are many other names by which a food can be known.

Food that is not pre-packed which comes from the delicatessen, bakery or salad bars may not be labelled. These foods are at risk of cross-contamination so it is best to avoid them. Cross-contamination happens when a food that is supposedly free of nuts; for example, accidentally comes into contact with nut protein (in the factory or on a work surface or from cutlery).

Supermarkets will provide 'free from' lists. Always check these lists are up to date and check every ingredient yourself.

Eating out in restaurants, take-aways and hotels

Try to plan ahead before eating out. Telephone the restaurant or hotel in advance to tell them you or your child have a food allergy and you need to strictly avoid any dishes that contain that food. They may be able to provide a separate dish.

Explain the risks - make it clear how serious the problem can be.

When you arrive, speak to a senior member of staff or to the chef himself.

If you are uncertain - ask. 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.

Parties

Contact the person giving the party to let them know you or your child has a food allergy and need to strictly avoid food and any recipes containing that food.

When you arrive at the party, remind the person providing the food which food you need to strictly avoid and check which dishes or food items can safely be eaten and which need to be avoided. Be particularly careful at buffet parties where food can be cross-contaminated (on plates, cutlery etc.).

If your child with a food allergy is under 8 years old, you may prefer to make party food yourself at home and take it with you to the party. This means your child knows that what he or she is eating is safe and, as long as they do not touch the main party food, they can enjoy themselves like everyone else.

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.

How to use your adrenaline auto-injector

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

Remember - Be prepared. Have the rescue medicines (antihistamine and adrenaline auto-injector) readily available at all times!

Make sure your friends and family know what to do to manage an allergic reaction.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Children's Allergy Nurses

Telephone: **0113 3920681**

Email: **leedsth-tr.allergy@nhs.net**

Webpage:

www.leedsth.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/childrens-allergy-service/

Further information:

Anaphylaxis Campaign: **www.anaphylaxis.org.uk**

Allergy UK: **www.allergyuk.org**

Food Standards Agency: **www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-allergy-and-intolerance**

What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit **bit.ly/nhsleedsfft**

Your views matter



© Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 3rd edition (Ver 1)

Developed by: Brenda DeWitt, Children's Allergy / Immunology Nurse Specialist
with acknowledgment to the Children's Allergy Service,
University Hospital, Southampton

Produced by: Medical Illustration Services • MID code: 20210513_001/IH

LN001784
Publication date
03/2022
Review date
03/2025