**A food allergy**

is when the body’s immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. The food that the body reacts to is known as the allergen. Most allergic reactions to food are mild, but some can be very serious and, in some cases, fatal. The only way people can deal with a food allergy is to avoid the foods that make them ill.

**Food intolerances**

are more common and are caused by the body being unable to digest certain substances e.g. lactose. They are not the same as food allergies, as most do not involve the immune system. Food intolerances can make someone feel very ill and affect their long-term health. You will usually feel the symptoms of a food intolerance slower than a food allergy, and sometimes it may not be felt until a few hours after you have eaten the food. Symptoms can last for hours, even into the next day.

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 food. Under current legislation, the duty of care is on food business owners to ensure that all mandatory allergen information is accurate, available and easily accessible to the consumer.

**Natasha’s Law**

From 1 October 2021 the requirements for labelling prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods changed across the UK.

Also known as **Natasha's Law**, this applies to any food business that produces PPDS food including primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, nurseries and community settings.

PPDS food is food that is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to consumers.  It is a single item, consisting of the food and its packaging, that is ready for presentation to the consumer before it is ordered or selected.

For food provided in your setting, this may mean changes to labelling for foods such as pizza or sandwiches which are packaged on the premises before the consumer orders them.

Any food business that produces PPDS food will be required to label it with the **name of the food** and a **full ingredients list**. **Allergenic ingredients must be emphasised within this list**

Examples of PPDS food that may be provided by schools and nurseries include:

* fruit pots
* breakfast pots
* boxes of chips or chicken nuggets placed under a hot lamp in anticipation of a lunchtime rush
* packaged sandwiches or salad boxes

PPDS does not include food that is not in packaging. Food placed into packaging or plated at the consumer's request is not PPDS.  
This food is not PPDS and can include products such as:

* unpackaged cakes, and unpackaged food behind a glass display counter or in a hot hold cupboard
* meals made or plated to order.

Non-prepacked (loose) food does not require a label and must meet current allergen information requirements for non-prepacked food. This means that the allergen information for each product must be recorded

If packed lunches are made on your premises in anticipation of an event, the allergen information requirements may vary. If the lunches are made and packed to order, these are not prepacked, and are therefore not PPDS.

If, however, the school lunches are made and packed without specific orders from individual children, then these would need to comply with the new PPDS labelling requirements.

If there are multiple items in a packed lunch, you will need to provide allergen information for each item. You will need to label each PPDS item individually.

Any prepacked items you have bought from elsewhere (that is food packed at a different location by another business) will already have full ingredients and allergen labelling.

**Top tips**

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|  | When buying ingredients, foods and drinks, the supplier must provide you with all the necessary ingredient and allergen information.  These are normally identified in bold on the label |
|  | Different brands of products may have different ingredients and therefore different allergies. Always check the labels |
|  | Foods that contain allergens in powdered form such as milk powder or flour should be stored in air-tight containers. |
|  | Where foods are decanted into containers, ensure the containers are clearly labelled with exactly what food they contain as well as any ingredients and allergens |
|  | Avoid Cross contamination - Allergens can easily pass from one food to another or from surfaces and equipment on to food. This can occur when foods are prepared on the same surfaces or when allergen free foods are prepared close to allergen containing dishes eg. flour dust when making scones  **Remember! Minute traces of foods which contain allergens can get into other foods and cause a reaction.** |
|  | Thoroughly clean and disinfect all equipment, utensils and worktops before preparing allergen-free food, or use separate equipment. |
|  | Wash your hands thoroughly. Where gloves are used, ensure that these are changed before preparing an allergen free food. |
|  | Do not cook allergen free food in oil in which you have cooked other foods |
|  | Never guess as to the ingredients in a dish – the soup may have been thickened with flour or there may be celery in the stock cube. |
|  | Ensure anyone working with you is trained to respond to allergen queries relating to the food they are producing. |

**May Contain statements**

The use of precautionary allergen labelling to communicate the risk of the unintentional presence of an allergen, can be done on a voluntary basis.

Such statements include ‘produced in a kitchen which uses…’ or ‘may contain’ or ‘not suitable for…’.

These statements should not be used as a substitute for good hygiene and safety practices.

**Given that you may be working in an environment which is used by various groups it would be advisable to have on display a precautionary label.** See attached example.

**Further information**

<https://www.allergyuk.org/>

https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses

To help you with allergen awareness consider incorporating this training into your training programme. It has been developed by Food Standards Scotland to help bring greater awareness about allergens in the food sector.

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-and-industry/safety-and-regulation/food-allergies-2/allergen-training-tool>

Food Allergy Warning

Please note that the foods we store, handle and display may come into contact with foods containing allergens

Please make us aware if you have a food allergy