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[Department
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Guidance

School food standards: allergy guide

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Applies to England

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The [standards for school food in England](#) allow schools and colleges to substitute items from their usual menus if certain items are in short supply.

If you're making changes to your menus, or substituting food products due to supply changes or for religious and cultural reasons, you must make sure you can continue to meet any special dietary needs. This includes pupils who cannot eat certain ingredients due to an allergy or other medical condition. If you need to adapt your menus at short notice, you must make sure that the needs of these pupils are still met.

This guide provides practical guidance and resources to help schools manage

allergy risks.

Legal requirements for schools and caterers

Under [section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#), schools have a duty to support pupils with medical conditions, including allergies. Schools must publish an allergy safety policy setting out arrangements to reduce the risk of individuals coming into contact with their known allergens (such as food allergens) and emergency response plans for cases of anaphylaxis.

The [Allergy safety in schools](#) statutory guidance outlines what schools must do to support pupils with allergies. This includes ensuring all staff receive allergy awareness training and that the school stocks “spare” adrenaline devices for use in an emergency. It also provides information on managing food allergy.

The [Food Information Regulations 2014](#) require all food businesses, including school caterers, to show allergen ingredients information for the food they serve. This makes it easier for schools to identify the food that pupils with allergies can and cannot eat.

The Food Information Regulations include requirements for the labelling of allergens on prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods. These are foods that are packaged on the premises before the consumer orders them. Refer to the Food Standards Agency’s [PPDS allergen labelling changes for schools, colleges and nurseries](#).

Practical measures and advice

If you’re making changes to your menus or substituting food products, you must continue to consider pupils with special dietary needs.

You should:

- check any product changes with your food suppliers
- ask your caterers to read labels and product information before using a product

- use the [dishes and their allergen content menu chart](#) to list the ingredients in all your meals
- ensure allergen ingredients remain identifiable

The Food Standards Agency has produced [allergen guidance for food businesses](#) to help with this. It includes information on:

- the 14 most common allergens
- food labelling requirements
- handling allergen ingredients
- further training

The [allergen guidance for institutional caterers](#) includes information for school caterers on:

- processes to help identify pupils with allergies
- methods to help cross-reference allergies against particular food types or ingredients

While schools may wish to discourage certain foods being brought on site (for example, through “nut-free” policies), it is more important to:

- remain actively aware of the risk posed by allergens
- take steps to minimise the risk of exposure
- have robust emergency response plans in place

Many foods do not contain nuts as an ingredient, but may carry a precautionary allergen labelling such as “may contain nuts”, which can make such policies difficult to implement. We recommend an “allergy aware” (such as “nut-aware”) environment rather than a “nut-free” policy.

Dealing with a severe reaction

The [Allergy safety in schools statutory guidance](#) outlines what to do in response to an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis. The allergy awareness training, which all staff should receive, will cover emergency response, including the use of adrenaline devices.

The NHS has [advice on food allergies](#) that contains information on symptoms and treatment. It also has more detailed advice on the [treatment of anaphylactic reactions](#).

Most allergic reactions are less severe. Check the [NHS advice on symptoms](#).

Other resources

The British Society for Allergy & Clinical Immunology is the national, professional and academic society and represents the specialty of allergy. It has created [Spare pens in schools](#) in conjunction with the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and members of the National Allergy Strategy Group, including patient organisations. The website brings together relevant information, advice for schools, teachers, parents and young people, together with allergy action plans and other resources.

In addition, free resources, including example allergy safety policies and example individual healthcare plans, can be found at:

- [Allergy Training and Support for Schools](#)
- [Allergy School: Teaching Children About Food Allergies](#)
- [AllergyWise in Education](#)

The Allergy Team, Benedict Blythe Foundation and the Independent Schools Bursars Association co-created [The Schools Allergy Code](#), a framework of best practice, to help schools keep pupils with allergies safe.

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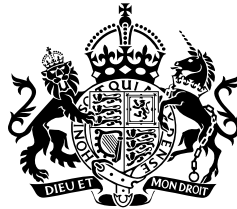
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