

4. **Make sure you have your rescue medication with you. You should always carry your oral antihistamine and adrenaline auto injector with you at all times.**

Beware of ...

- Foods that aren't pre packed such as bakery items or food from a deli or buffet counter. These products may be wrapped but not labelled with the information you need.
- Cross-Contamination. Sometimes, small amounts of the food you need to avoid may have come into contact with another food. For example, nuts and seeds falling off baked items or the same serving spoon being used for multiple products at a deli counter.
- It is important to be careful of food self-service areas and at buffets.
- Eating out. You may want to contact a restaurant in advance about your food allergy as well as speaking to the chef about your allergy whilst choosing your dishes from the menu.

Don't risk eating a food if you aren't sure it is suitable!

Further information

- The Anaphylaxis Campaign
www.anaphylaxis.org.uk
- Food Standards Agency
www.food.gov.uk
- AllergyUK
www.allergyuk.org

Contact numbers

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Paediatric Allergy Team on 0118 322 7224.

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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Food labelling

Understanding food labels and products labelled “may contain...”

Information for families

You have been given this information sheet because your child has been diagnosed with a food allergy. This leaflet outlines food labelling in the UK and describes the meaning of “may contain” food labels.

Always read the ingredients list

Many products have allergy alert or warning boxes. Manufacturers are not required to use these, but many choose to voluntarily. If there is no alert box it is important that you do not assume that there are no allergens – you should **read the ingredient list carefully**.

All products that contain one of the following foods in the recipe must have a label on the packing if produced in Europe.

- Milk
- Wheat
- Lupin
- Nuts*
- Fish
- Eggs
- Soya
- Peanut*
- Sesame
- Mustard
- Shellfish, e.g. scampi, prawns
- Molluscs, e.g. mussels, clams
- Celery
- Sulphites

* Peanuts must be called peanuts - other names for peanut should not be used. Foods that contain tree nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecans, Brazil

nuts, pistachio and macadamia nuts must be listed on the ingredient list. Pine nuts (a seed), coconut (a palm) and chestnuts (a tree nut) are not under the same regulation and may not be listed.

If you are on holiday in another country this rule may not apply.

Other food allergies

If you have an allergy to a different food – lentils, pine nuts, coconut and chestnuts for instance – this may not be on the allergy alert box. Always read the ingredients as well as any warning label carefully.

May contain

Some companies use the term “may contain” on their food labels. For example “may contain traces of nuts” or “may contain seeds”. This means that even though an ingredient has not been deliberately included in the food the manufacturer cannot be sure that the product doesn’t accidentally contain small amounts of them.

These warnings should always be taken seriously.

Some people with food allergies only eat food that has been prepared in an entirely allergen free environment. Many families do this successfully.

However, so many foods are labelled “may contain” that this can be very restrictive.

Some families choose to manage “may contain” products by carefully assessing the risk and following these 4 rules.

1. Check the product every time. Just because you have eaten a particular food in the past and not had an allergic reaction it does not mean that the food will always be safe to eat. Recipes change and it may be the next batch that is contaminated.
2. Don’t eat “may contain” products when you are unwell. The amount of a food that you need to eat to cause an allergic reaction is called the **threshold**. This varies, as does the severity of a reaction you may have to the same amount of the food. Things that can lower your threshold include strenuous exercise, drinking alcohol, being unwell (for any reason but especially with an infection) or symptoms of asthma or hay fever.
3. Make sure that you are in a place where you can get help. Eating “may contain” foods can cause an allergic reaction. Make sure that you are in a place where an ambulance can be called and can arrive promptly. Some families choose to eat traces only at home for this very reason and avoid all “may contain” products outside the family home.