

Advice for teenagers and young adults with a food allergy

Advice to support teenagers and young adults manage their food allergy.

Living with a food allergy can affect people in different ways. Having a food allergy can pose extra challenges to daily tasks and have unexpected impacts on new experiences.

For teenagers and young adults with a food allergy, navigating the new experiences that come with these stages of life can bring about extra risks.

Research shows that children and young people are at a higher risk of experiencing food allergy reactions. And while many are confident about managing their food allergy in general, they are less likely to tell a café or restaurant about their allergy, particularly if they have eaten a meal from the same place before.

Always speak to the restaurant about your food allergies, even if it's a meal you've had before. Never assume a meal will be safe, as ingredients can change.

For people with food allergies, having supportive friends can make all the difference. Eating out is better when your friends have your back. **Speak up for allergies.**

This advice will help you to think about the risks of different situations and manage your food allergy effectively.

Living with a food allergy

For many, living away from home, can be the first time that you take full responsibility for managing a food allergy.

Growing up, parents or guardians may have been responsible for checking labels on food packaging for allergens. You will need to get used to checking all food labels and understand ingredients labelling. It is required by law that the main [14 allergens](#) are highlighted on a food label.

Don't assume that a food will be safe to eat without checking. Some food and drink, including spirits, sauces and ready-made meals may contain allergens. Ingredients can change from the last time you had it.

Communicating your food allergy

Living with a food allergy you may find that you are asked a lot of questions and that you have to ask about different ingredients. Try not to feel uncomfortable asking these questions as they are important to your safety. Ask direct questions to make sure people understand the severity for you and that you get accurate information.

Communicating with partners and friends is also important, so that they know whether to avoid certain food types. This will make them better understand how they can help you manage your food allergy.

Eating out and ordering a takeaway with a food allergy

It is important to speak to the restaurant every time when you eat out, order a takeaway or get food delivered. Speak up for allergies and don't assume that a meal is safe because you have had it before.

This is because the recipe, ingredients, chef or kitchen staff may have changed. Often it is not clear, unless you ask, which allergens are in meals and what quantity they are in.

Be clear about your food allergy or intolerance to the server. It can help to give examples of the foods that can cause a reaction.

When ordering for several people, make sure the restaurant will label the allergy-safe meal and container. It is required by law for the restaurant to provide this information when the food is delivered, but confirming directly with the restaurant will help to make sure they understand your food allergy.

If you don't feel that the person you're ordering from fully understands your needs, ask to speak to someone else. If you're not confident they understand your allergy, consider ordering from elsewhere.

Tips

Top tips for ordering an allergy-safe takeaway

1. **Be allergy aware** – Find out if anyone in the group you're ordering for has a food allergy.
2. **Speak to the restaurant every time** – If ordering by app, don't rely on the in-app messaging service. Call the restaurant directly and make sure they understand the allergy. Remember to ask, even when ordering the usual, because the recipe, ingredients, chef or kitchen staff may have changed.
3. **Be clear** – Give examples of food that could cause a reaction and be clear about the allergy.
4. **Ask the restaurant to label the allergy-safe meal** – Make sure the container will be labelled so that it's clear when the meal arrives and there's no risk of cross-contamination.
5. **Follow your instincts** – If the person you're ordering from doesn't understand the allergy or intolerance, ask to speak to the manager. If you still don't feel confident, consider ordering elsewhere.
6. **Don't feel embarrassed** – There is no need to feel awkward asking about allergy. [Food business are legally required to make allergen information available when you order and when the food is delivered.](#)

Allergy alerts

We issue a food alerts service so that you can make safe food choices and are aware of missing or incorrect allergen information on food products.

You can [sign up to allergy alerts](#) to receive a free email or text message each time we issue a recall specific to your food allergy. This will include information about what to do if you have bought the product that is being recalled.