

## Patient information

# Food labelling advice for children with adrenaline auto-injectors

- You have been given this information sheet because your child has been diagnosed with a food allergy and is at risk of anaphylaxis.
- This leaflet outlines food labelling laws in the UK and describes the meaning of 'may contain'.

### Always read the ingredient list

- It is mandatory that all products produced in the European Economic Community (EEC) that contain one of the following food allergens in the recipe, must say so in the list of ingredients. This will be highlighted in either **bold** or larger font so it can be clearly identified:
  - Milk
  - Egg
  - Wheat
  - Soya
  - Lupin
  - Mustard
  - Celery
  - Fish
  - Shellfish – scampi, prawn
  - Molluscs - mussels
  - Peanut
  - Tree nuts (individual nut names are usually listed eg almond, hazel nut)
  - Sesame
  - Sulphites
- Some food labels may still contain the old style 'allergy alert' boxes but these are being replaced and should not be used.
- Foods imported from other countries may be labelled differently and should be clearly checked.
- Do not assume that because you have eaten a food before you do not need to check the label, recipes may change.

- Food that contains tree nuts such as almonds, Brazil nuts, cashew nuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachio nuts or walnuts 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.

### **Other food allergies**

- If you have an allergy to a different food, such as lentils, this will not be listed in the ingredient list in **bold** or large font. It will however be on the list.
- Always read the ingredients as well as any warning label carefully.

### **'May contain'**

- Some companies use the term 'may contain' on their food labels. 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.
- This is usually because of contamination from machinery which makes a different product that may contain that allergen. For example 'may contain trace of hazelnut' may appear on the label of a packet of plain biscuits, because the company use the same machinery to make one that contains hazelnut.
- These warnings should always be taken seriously, but avoiding all foods that are labelled 'may contain' can be very restrictive.
- Some families choose to manage 'may contain' products by carefully assessing the risk and following these three rules.
  1. Don't eat 'may contain' products when you are unwell or your asthma is not well controlled as being unwell can lower your threshold to reaction.
  2. Don't take a risk if you are in a remote location or have poor access to help.
  3. 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:**

### **1. Foods that are NOT pre-packed:**

- Examples are foods such as bakery items or food from a deli counter.
- These products may be wrapped but not labelled with the information you need.
- The new EEC regulation states that all foods sold loose (this includes restaurants) must tell you if they contain one of the 14 listed allergens. If there are no ingredients on display, ASK if the food contains the allergen.

### **2. 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.

## **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.
- Ask if a particular dish contains that allergen and avoid eating a food if you aren't sure it's suitable

*With thanks to the Children's Allergy Clinic, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, for permission to reproduce this information.*

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