

Shopping and Cooking for a Restricted Diet

Advice provided by allergyuk.org



Shopping for yourself or others on a restricted diet can be daunting and time consuming if you are not used to it. The following is a guide to help you shop successfully whilst saving time and ensures you no longer feel left out when it comes to eating your favourite foods.

Try the following to add variety, taste and nutrition to your family's meals and snacks.

> free-from lists - supermarkets/ manufacturers

It is helpful to obtain a 'free-from list' for the particular allergen you wish to avoid. This is a regularly updated list of foods that are suitable for a particular diet. Available lists usually include; milk free, egg free, wheat free, gluten free, soya free, tree-nut & peanut free, sesame free, preservative free, vegan, vegetarian, etc. They are available free of charge from the head office and/or website of supermarkets or manufacturers.

Remember, even if you're using the free from lists you still need to double check all food ingredient labels before you buy them.

> Supermarket special diet foods

Many supermarkets have their own-label free-from range. These

can include dairy free ice creams, spreads, yoghurts, cheeses, gluten free biscuits, bread, wraps and pasta.

They are usually found in the free from or organic aisle but can also be hidden amongst other similar foods, for example, dairy free milks may be found alongside other longlife milks, or may be amongst the fresh dairy milks. Be careful to check the full ingredients listing when choosing these products, the allergens will usually be highlighted in bold within the ingredients list.

> finding foods

You may be surprised to hear that many foods in the standard aisles are actually wheat free, dairy free, soya free etc. Do check ingredient labels to find lots of new foods you would have otherwise considered unsuitable.

> Apps (computer/tablet/ phone applications)

There has been an increase in available apps that can help you identify ingredients in manufactured foods in an instant by scanning the product barcode. They are particularly useful for identifying ingredients that are not one of the 14 allergens that by law have to be clearly labelled on all pre-packaged manufactured foods for sale anywhere within the EU.



For more help,
contact the Allergy
UK helpline:

9am to 5pm,
Monday to Friday

01322 619 898

info@allergyuk.org

Key facts

> Simply walking past an aisle containing unwrapped nuts can trigger a mild reaction for some people with a severe nut allergy

> The top 14 allergens are: milk, egg, wheat, gluten, soya, sesame, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, lupin, celery, mustard, sulphites, tree nuts and peanuts).

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The Information Standard

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> Internet sites

There are now many internet sites that offer special diet products and others that offer a mail/telephone order service. If you cannot find these on the internet contact the Allergy UK Helpline.

> Health food shops

Visit your local health food shop regularly, they usually have a good selection of readily available special diet products. They will also have catalogues or websites that you can order products from that are not on the shelves.

> Labelling

Supermarkets and food manufacturers have made a huge effort to provide more informative labelling on their products. By law all pre-packed manufactured foods must declare the 14 foods listed above. Since December 2014 this legal requirement has extended to include the labelling of allergens in unpackaged items such as delicatessen and bakery items. The allergens will either be displayed with the items or you can ask the staff for this information, which they are required to have readily available.

There is currently no legislation on the labelling of unintentional ingredients, which may be in trace amounts in a product due to manufacturing practices and processing. All labelling of this type is voluntarily put on

products. Typical labelling you may come across includes: 'may contain traces of peanut', 'made in factory using sesame'. Some consider this labelling defensive to 'cover backs', but for those with a severe food allergy, the warnings should be taken seriously, as some products really will contain traces of the allergen. It is therefore best to play it safe and avoid these foods all together. .

> Cooking

Using suitable existing recipes/adapting existing recipes

It may be possible to continue to eat certain products and cook some of the recipes you used to before you discovered your food allergy, but you may have to make some adaptations.. Certain ingredients, such as gluten free flour, may take time and practice to adjust to but generally this is easy to do.

Make a file of all your favourite recipes that you have successfully adapted and enjoyed. You could also take photographs of your creations and make a recipe file, which you can share with others wishing to cook for you.

If you are egg or milk allergic it is worth looking at the Vegan Society website or vegan cookbooks. Many Kosher recipes are also milk free.

New recipes from existing cookbooks

Don't forget to have a good look at all your cookbooks at home. There are probably lots of recipes that are suitable for your special diet that you haven't yet tried.

Special diet cookbooks



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Special diet cookbooks are cookbooks devoted to a particular diet. They are often written by others with food allergies who want to share ideas and recipes with others. They are usually available from health food shops, bookshops, the internet, from allergy associations such as Allergy UK or from your dietitian. www.amazon.co.uk has an excellent selection. Choose a recipe book that avoids only your allergen, as choosing one that covers lots of allergies results in cutting out ingredients unnecessarily, thus restricting your diet unnecessarily.

Recipes from the internet

What did we do before the World Wide Web? You will find an abundance of excellent websites by searching for 'special diet cookery' or 'allergy recipes' or anything similar.. They are also accessed via the 'links' on many of the allergy websites, you'll also find some great recipes via various vegan sites.

Recipes from special diet product companies

When manufacturers produce a special product such as egg replacer, gluten free mix or dairy free margarine, they often produce a recipe book or leaflet. They show the consumer how versatile the product is (and encourage you to use more!). Make use of these tried and tested recipes.

> Cross contamination issues for the very allergic

If you are severely allergic (anaphylactic) to a certain food, complete avoidance of even traces amounts is essential. You may inadvertently

come into contact with the food you are allergic to in a number of ways:

- By buying foods without an ingredients label, such as a bakery or delicatessen item without checking or asking for the ingredient listing
- By coming into contact with allergens spilt on the conveyer belt at the till or open packets in-store
- By buying bakery/delicatessen goods which, although may not contain any harmful ingredients, may have come into contact with an allergic ingredient during baking/handling. Don't get anxious about this, just stay alert to the possibilities of cross-contamination....

> Walking past an allergic food

Simply walking past an aisle containing unwrapped nuts can trigger a mild reaction for some people with a severe nut allergy. This is worth remembering, especially around the Christmas season when nut are more readily available.. The same applies to fish cooking as the vapours have been found to make the allergen airborne. Only avoid this if it affects you – don't impose any unnecessary restrictions on your life.

> Cosmetics labelling

The sixth amendment to the European Union Cosmetic Directive (1993) was implemented in December 1997. It requires all the ingredients to be included on the label for soaps, cosmetics and 'personal care products'. This classification is taken to include anything that is applied to the skin, eyes, mouth, hair or nails for the purpose of cleansing, giving a pleasant smell

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or enhancing appearance. The labelling has helped consumers to identify products that might be harmful to them. However, because the labelling can be in Latin it is sometimes incomprehensible, which can cause problems when common ingredients are unrecognisable. An example of this is 'Arachis oil', which is the International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI) name for peanut oil.

The only solution is to have a list with the Latin names of the ingredients that you must avoid and refer to this whenever buying the products you find cause problems. Often this will not be an issue, so avoidance is not necessary. Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfumery Association Ltd is prepared to answer queries about these issues and has a useful leaflet listing some of the Latin (INCI) names. Below is a list of popular ingredients with their ordinary names alongside their Latin names.

Ingredients and their INCI names (as used on product packaging)

Avocado	Persea gratissima
Bitter almond	Prunus amara
Brazil nut	Bertholletia excels
Coconut	Cocos nucifera
Cod liver oil	Gadi iecur
Egg	Ovum
Hazel nut americana/avellana	Corylus rostrata
Macadamia nut	Macademia ternifolia
Melon	Cucumis melo
Milk	Lac
Mixed fish oil	Piscum iecur
Pea	Pisum sativum
Peanut oil	Arachis oil
Sesame	Sesamum indicum
Soya	Glycine soja
Sweet almond/Almond oil	Prunus dulcis
Walnut	Juglans regia/nigra

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A comprehensive inventory of these substances has been published by the European Commission and is available on their website or on the Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfumery Association website. The terminology used in the labelling of products must comply with that in the inventory.

Not everyone will react to the listed ingredients so only avoid them if necessary.

> Medications

Lastly, don't forget to check the ingredients list of all medicines and supplements as these can contain hidden allergens, however, as they are highly refined they often do not cause a problem.

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