

Your quick guide to: Shopping and Cooking for a Restricted Diet

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.

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 free-from foods

Many supermarkets have their own free-from range. These can include dairy free ice creams, spreads, yoghurts, cheeses, wheat 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 long-life milks or may be amongst the fresh dairy milks. Be careful to check the full ingredients list when choosing these products as not all free from products will be free from your allergen. By law the 14 main allergens must be listed in the ingredients list, usually highlighted in bold.

Finding foods

There are plenty of options in the standard aisles that are wheat, dairy, soya free etc. Do check ingredient labels to find lots

of new foods you would have otherwise considered unsuitable.

Internet sites

There are now many internet sites that offer special diet products and others that offer a mail/telephone order service.

The internet can also be a useful way of checking products labels before going shopping or shopping online. Many sites offer a filter option making shopping that little bit easier.

Health food shops

Local health food shops will 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.

Vegan does not always mean milk, egg and fish free

With the plant based/vegan market getting bigger there are now a lot more products available. Whilst this does bring more availability and options, not all products will be suitable for those with allergies as there can be unintentional cross contamination or include an allergen your allergic too.

Interestingly, novel products using animal milk free protein are being used in the USA but also reports in Spain and Israel. The milk protein is identical to milk proteins casein and whey but have been nowhere near a cow yet can cause reactions to those with cow's milk allergy. It works by using biotechnology in a process called precision fermentation where they feed tiny microorganisms to make milk proteins in the lab. This is definitely something to be aware of for the future as the vegan market continues to grow.

Key facts:

Many supermarkets have their **own free-from range**. These can include dairy free ice creams, spreads, yoghurts, cheeses, wheat free biscuits, bread, wraps and pasta.

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.

Local **health food shops** will usually have a good selection of readily available special diet products.

Allergy UK Helpline

Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm:

Call: 01322 619 898

Email: info@allergyuk.org

Visit us at:

allergyuk.org

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Labelling

Supermarkets and food manufacturers have made a huge effort to provide more informative labelling on their products. By law all prepacked manufactured foods must declare the 14 main allergens in the ingredient list.

Recent legislation has changed regarding prepacked food for direct sale (also known as Natasha's Law). This refers to food which is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to consumers and is in packaging before it is ordered or selected. This must also list the 14 main allergens in the ingredient list. Some examples include:

- Burgers or sausages prepacked by a butcher on site ready for sale
- Products prepacked in a supermarket such as pizzas, rotisserie chicken, salad and pasta pots

There is currently no legislation on the labelling of unintentional ingredients also known as precautionary allergen labelling (PAL), 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. Examples include '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.

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, or you might be able to make some adaptations to your favourite recipes. Certain ingredients, such as removing egg for those with egg allergy

can be replaced with apple sauce, mashed banana, chai seeds or powdered egg replacers depending on the recipe. It 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.

Allergy cookbooks

There are now plenty of allergy cookbooks on the market, often written by others with food allergies who want to share ideas and recipes. They are usually available from health food shops, bookshops, the internet, health care professionals or associations such as Allergy UK. 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 internet? 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.

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 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.

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

Ingredients	INCI names
Bitter almond	Prunus amara
Brazil nut	Bertholletia excelsa
Cashew	Anacardium occidentale
Coconut	Cocos nucifera
Cod liver oil	Gadi iecur
Egg	Ovum
Hazel nut americana / avellana	Corylus rostrata
Kiwi	Actinidia chinensis/ Actinidia deliciosa
Macadamia nut	Macademia ternifolia
Milk	Lac
Mustard	Brassica alba
Mixed fish oil	Piscum iecur
Pea	Pisum sativum
Peanut oil	Arachis hypogaea oil
Pistachio	Pistacia verva
Sesame	Seasum indicum
Soya	Glycine soja
Sweet almond / Almond oil	Prunus amygdalus dulcis
Walnut	Juglans regia / nigra
Wheat	Triticum vulgare, Triticum aestivum

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. If you are unsure speak with your local Pharmacist.

Clinical contributions:

Allergy UK Clinical Team

Lydia Collins-Hussey, Clinical Dietetic Advisor
 Amena Warner, Head of Clinical Services

Additional Resources / References

Living with an allergy

<https://www.allergyuk.org/living-with-an-allergy/>

Food Allergy

<https://www.allergyuk.org/types-of-allergies/food-allergy/>

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