

# Your quick guide to: Supporting children and adolescents to independence with their allergies

The road to independence can be a vulnerable time for both child/adolescent and parent/guardian. It is a time often associated with increased anxiety, low self-esteem and poor mental health.

It is also a time of mixed emotion, wanting your child and adolescent to have independence, but also not wanting to let go and lose control. Yet still wanting them to live a fulfilled life on their own.

At Allergy UK, we want to provide support to both parents/carerers, and children and adolescents on embarking the next steps. So we have provided some tips that can be implemented easily, to help your child gain more independence around their allergies.

Transitioning	Tips/Practical Steps
Learning to keep them-self safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This includes your child understanding their diagnosis and what they should be avoiding</li> <li>• Recognising their symptoms and the difference between mild and severe reactions</li> <li>• Understanding their allergy action plan and how to use emergency medication</li> <li>• Understanding when to replace medication (it is good to get them involved by setting reminders on their phone or a calendar)</li> <li>• Taking responsibility by carrying their own medication, get them to choose or decorate a bag they like and will want to carry</li> <li>• Reassuring them not to be afraid of their allergies</li> </ul>
Being involved in decisions around their own care as early as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging your child to prepare questions for themselves before their allergy appointments, this will help gain confidence and make the transition to adult services easier</li> <li>• At the start of the consultation, urge your child to talk about their allergy and ask some of the questions they have prepared, this will give you insight into what they know and what they may need help with</li> <li>• As they get older, discuss having part of the consultation on their own (eg the first five minutes) and build this up over time at each consultation</li> </ul>

## Key facts:

With supportive friends, children and adolescents are less likely to take risks with food allergy.

Some children may take longer than others to feel comfortable talking about their allergies.

## Allergy UK Helpline

Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm:

Call: 01322 619 898

Email: [info@allergyuk.org](mailto:info@allergyuk.org)

Visit us at:

**Allergyuk.org**

# Your quick guide to:

## Supporting children and adolescents to independence with their allergies

<p>Advocating for themselves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Such as calling a restaurant to ask about suitable options or speaking to a waiter when going out for a meal</li> <li>• Speaking with the school nurse about an update to their allergy plan</li> <li>• Or a school teacher about an upcoming trip</li> <li>• Discussing their allergies with a leader from a sports or craft club</li> <li>• If these are too daunting to start with, try role playing common scenarios at home, or writing down an allergy script together</li> </ul>
<p>Telling friends (supportive friendships)</p>	<p>Research has shown that by having supportive friends, children and adolescents are less likely to take part in food allergy related risky behaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage your child to teach their friends about their allergies and what to do if there is a severe reaction. This could be in a school talk or when friends come over to their house</li> <li>• Get your child to show friends what their emergency medication looks like, where it is kept and what to do if there is a severe reaction</li> <li>• Practise using trainer <a href="#">adrenaline auto-injectors</a>, these are available for free from each company.</li> </ul>
<p>Take the pressure off</p>	<p>It is important for skills and confidence to be gained naturally, without pressure, and not forced. Some children are shy or lack self-confidence and may take longer to feel comfortable about talking about their allergies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep practising different situations with them, the more it is practised, the more it becomes habit and part of daily life</li> <li>• Support them in how to say no and not being afraid to speak up, such as saying no in a café or restaurant that has not clarified or declared ingredients</li> <li>• Remain positive and calm even when things might not go to plan, children pick up on stresses and anxiety</li> <li>• Acknowledge the small wins, praise your child and yourself</li> </ul>

### Clinical contributions:

#### Allergy UK Clinical Team

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*This Factsheet was prepared by Allergy UK's Clinical Team and made possible by the support of Sanofi.*

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