

How to avoid cross-contamination



Information for patients

Sheffield Dietetics



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



What is cross-contamination?

Cross-contamination occurs when a food that is free from an allergen such as nuts, milk or egg, becomes contaminated with that allergen.

It can occur during food manufacture, food preparation, or food service. It is a particular risk when eating outside the home.

To reduce the risk of cross-contamination:

When eating away from home

- Avoid foods served at buffets, self service salad bars, and dessert trolleys.
- Inform restaurant staff of your food allergy and the risk of cross-contamination. For example, food handlers' hands may be contaminated with an allergen.
- Do not accept food that has had the food allergen removed. For example, cream scraped from the top of a dessert, or marzipan taken off a fruit cake.
- Ensure plates and cutlery are clean.
- Ensure restaurant staff use clean utensils to serve food. Do not accept food that has been served with utensils that have previously been used to serve another food.
- Be wary of unpackaged foods such as those sold in some bakeries, delicatessens and wholefoods shops.
- If you doubt the safety of any food served to you, **avoid it completely**.

In the home

- Pay special attention to food labelling, and take note of 'may contain' warnings.
- If your allergy is very severe, try to make your home an allergen free zone. Ask other members of the household not to bring the food you are sensitive to into the house.
- Try to keep allergen containing food in a separate area of the kitchen. Label all foods clearly, especially if they are unpackaged.
- Avoid using odd shaped containers to store foods, as these can be difficult to clean, and may be contaminated with an allergen despite having been washed.
- Take special care with washing up and the wiping down of kitchen/dining surfaces. Ensure all spillages are thoroughly cleaned immediately.
- Ensure all cooking utensils are thoroughly cleaned in a dishwasher or with hot soapy water before use.
- Consider using separate cooking utensils, cutlery and plates to other members of the household.
- Use separate containers of butter, margarine, sugar, jam, pickle etc to other members of the household.
- Do not re-use cooking oil that has previously been used to fry a food you are allergic to.
- Avoid kissing someone who has recently eaten the food to which you are allergic.

Useful websites

NHS Choices

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy

Anaphylaxis Campaign

- www.anaphylaxis.org.uk or call **01252 542 029**

Allergy UK

- www.allergyuk.org or call **01322 619 898**

British Dietetic Association (BDA)

- www.bda.uk.com

Name:

Date:

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Hospital:

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Dietitian:

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Contact number:

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