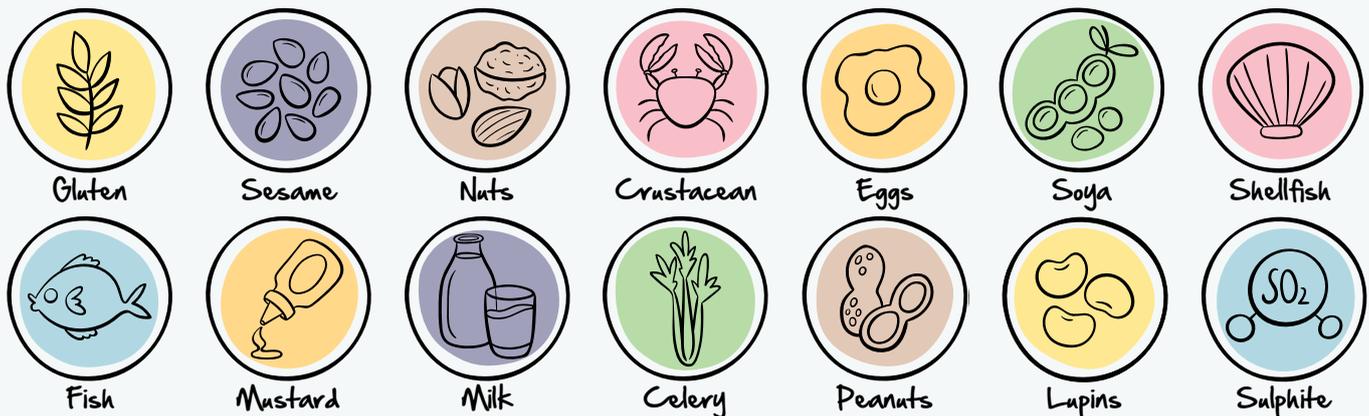


Every bite matters: protecting children with allergies.

Around 8% of children and young people in the UK have a food allergy. Allergic reactions are when the immune system wrongly identifies a substance as a threat. Reactions to allergens range from feeling poorly to being fatal within a few minutes. Even tiny amounts can cause severe reactions.

Since Natasha's Law (Natasha Ednan-Laperouse died after eating a pre-packed sandwich) came into effect in October 2021, all pre-packed food must include full ingredients with the 14 main allergens highlighted:



The worst case scenario: anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is "a serious and often sudden allergic reaction, requiring emergency treatment" (Anaphylaxis UK). Usually rapid, it can happen up to three hours later.

The ABC symptoms are:

- **Airway** – swelling in the throat, tongue or upper airways, difficulty swallowing
- **Breathing** – wheezy, difficult or noisy breathing
- **Circulation** – dizzy, faint, sleepy, confusion, clammy, unconscious.

Other symptoms include a red raised rash; tingly or itchy mouth; swollen lips, face or eyes; stomach pain; vomiting. If a child experiences any of these symptoms, treat them immediately for anaphylaxis.

In an emergency:

- Use the patient's adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) then call 999. Say you suspect anaphylaxis. Make the patient lie down
- If symptoms do not improve administer a second AAI after five minutes
- Keep a note of the time you used the AAI's.

Children or adults at risk of anaphylaxis should have two prescribed AAI's with staff trained to use it.

Millie's Mark ensures that all your staff are fully trained and have confidence to act in an emergency, such as allergic reactions.

rebrand.ly/AnaphylaxisUKGuide



Dealing with food allergies proactively

In the process of attaining Millie's Mark, settings must look at managing risks associated with children's allergies. These include staff training and keeping their knowledge of their children up to date.

Children can develop an allergy at any time - which is why sitting with the children at meal times is important. Take particular care of new children who may be exposed to foods they haven't eaten before and to young babies when they are being weaned.

Communication – before a child starts nursery, speak to the parents about potential allergies and create an allergy action plan shared with all staff. Make sure this is included on your registration form. Speak with them regularly about their child's progress and keep risk assessments under review.

Robust policies and procedures - keep your allergy policy and protocol updated and published prominently. Consider keeping "spare" injectors for emergencies but locked away safely. Keep your records up to date and record any incidents thoroughly. Be inclusive – make sure all your children can join in activities.

Staff training - arrange annual allergy-specific training for your staff which includes dealing with anaphylaxis. Make sure they all know any signs and symptoms. Staff must know about the 14 main allergens and which ones are in your meals.

Tanya Ednan-Laperouse OBE, who founded The Natasha Allergy Research Foundation with her husband Nadim following their daughter's death, said: "We recognise that nurseries and out-of-school settings are seeing more children with food allergies than ever before."



"Every nursery wants to give each child the chance to achieve their potential in a safe and inclusive environment but unfortunately, there is a lack of understanding about the seriousness of food allergies and how to manage them.

"We want to end the challenges that children with food allergies face so that they can be fully involved in all activities. To support nurseries, Natasha's Foundation has launched Allergy School - free, practical resources for staff, to help them create inclusive and safe environments for children with food allergies."

Controlling what food children eat in your nursery

Food charges must be voluntary in England and Scotland; they are limited in Wales although parents can only send food in if nurseries allow it. For many nurseries it has become increasingly difficult to maintain a safe eating environment. And yet nurseries are responsible for keeping children safe and healthy, making sure they eat nutritional meals and controlling allergens.

Consider having a packed lunch policy which spells out what you will allow to be brought into your nursery, including no food at all. Read our blog about what to include: ndna.org.uk/PackedLunches

Read how one nursery came to a workable compromise:



Gemma Lawson from Green Roots Nursery, West Sussex

What was your food ethos?

To support our healthy eating ethos, we aim for all children to eat the same foods whenever possible. For the past 11 years until April 2025, we have ensured our chef meets all children's needs and have not allowed any food to be brought into the nursery. Due to early years funding, we have maintained our ethos by asking parents not willing or able to pay for our food to provide their own in line with our menu. This is a balanced and inclusive approach.

How did West Sussex council try to get you to change this?

WSCC were concerned that requesting parents to follow our recipes and ingredients would cause a barrier to accessing funded hours. WSCC wanted us to allow parents to provide food as they wished.

What was your compromise and how did you reach this?

We escalated our concerns that if we followed WSCC requests children would be put at risk. We shared our risk assessments, management plans and procedures in how our setting needs to manage allergies and maintain our healthy eating ethos.

WSCC agreed that we could ask parents to provide meals in line with our menu if we take into consideration personal, cultural, dietary and financial reasons. We work with parents to understand and support their challenges. They also confirmed we could manage certain ingredients being brought in.

What has been parents' reaction to this?

Of the 160 children attending, nine provide their own food. The majority of those parents were disappointed they weren't allowed to provide whatever meals they chose. We used an 'Individual Menu Plan' for each child to understand what the parents could provide which was similar: eg spaghetti with tomato sauce when we serve spaghetti bolognaise.

Do you still feel you can control allergens coming into nursery?

When we provided all the food we had full control of allergens, now we no longer have that level of control. However we cannot put in place any further control measures when food is being brought into nursery. We ask parents to sign a declaration agreeing to our policies.

What advice would you give nurseries in similar situations?

We remain focussed that providing the best start for our children is at the heart of what we do. We researched nutrition for young children and supported them forming healthy relationships with food. We reviewed our procedures in managing allergens and how we can keep children safe with food being brought in. Parents appreciate the services we provide and we looked at how this can continue. We support parents in their decision to provide meals but made sure it would not have a negative impact on us or the other children. We wrote our policy reflecting this and can fully explain to parents or WSCC our reasons and rationale.

Food allergy resources

Dealing with Allergies webinar from 25 September:

ndna.org.uk/NDNATalkOnDemand

The Natasha Allergy Research Foundation: narf.org.uk

Allergy School: allergyschool.org.uk

Anaphylaxis UK: anaphylaxis.org.uk

Millie's Mark: milliesmark.com

Scotland Setting the Table:

bit.ly/STTGScotland

Welsh Government Guidance:

bit.ly/FoodAndNutritionWG

www.ndna.org.uk

