



# How to manage food allergies in children under 5 years

Allergies are more likely to develop if there's a history of eczema, asthma, hayfever or food allergies in your family. Breastfeeding your baby exclusively for the first 6 months and continued breastfeeding throughout the first year will help to lower their risk.

- As parents/carers of children under 5 years, you should ask for advice from your GP if you have any concerns regarding allergies with your child.
- If you are concerned, you could seek an allergy referral for assessment of your child's condition via the GP to a specialist NHS allergy team: [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG116](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG116)
- As a parent/carer, it is helpful for you to understand the type of allergic reaction, how to manage, use of medication, the level of risk and appropriate allergen avoidance.
- The main types of reactions include:
  - Immediate reaction within 2 hours of exposure;
  - Delayed reaction over 3 hours after exposure;
  - Mixed reactions and delayed onset.

Avoiding allergens (the triggers to allergic reactions) is key to avoiding an allergic reaction. Allergens are found in foods and can be in the environment, e.g. carried on hands, clothing and in the air (aerolysed).

Since 2014, the 14 main food allergens must be listed on food packaging. These are highlighted in the box below:

Milk	Eggs	Gluten (wheat, barley, rye, oats)
Fish	Peanuts	Crustaceans (prawn, lobster)
Mustard	Celery	Molluscs (mussels, oysters)
Sesame	Sulphites	
Soya	Lupin (flour used in baking)	
Tree nuts (e.g. almond, brazil, cashew)		

For more information, see: [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

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For additional Parent Tips see [www.ihv.org.uk](http://www.ihv.org.uk)

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## Top tips for parents

### Food shopping with allergies in mind

- Food labels should be checked every time you shop as manufacturers may change the ingredients.
- Pre-packed food (e.g. from a sandwich shop or takeaway) must have allergen ingredients included on the label from summer 2019.
- “May contain” warnings on food packaging should be taken seriously, and risk assessment discussed with the parent/carer as part of the child’s allergy management plan (see below for more information).
- Register for free text/e-mails on ingredient lists in food products at:  
[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)  
[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)  
[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)
- The “Food Maestro” phone App can help make “free from” shopping easier, by scanning bar codes for “safe” allergy products.
- Online shopping for specialist foods:  
e.g. [www.goodnessdirect.co.uk](http://www.goodnessdirect.co.uk)
- Any foods can cause food allergy and, if you suspect a food, you should discuss with the health visitor, GP or your allergy team.

A correct allergy diagnosis and access to a paediatric dietician is important so that your child’s diet continues to be nutritionally sound. You can talk with your health visitor or GP to find out your local procedures.

Excluding major food groups, e.g. milk, can lead to poor growth and dietary insufficiencies. Further information on restricted diets is available from: [www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)

### A child’s allergy management plan

When your child is away from the home, an allergy management plan will be developed by your doctor or nurse for you to share a copy with your child’s school, nursery or childminder. This can include:

- your child’s name and photo;
- a list of allergen triggers;
- an emergency plan and medications;
- contact numbers for yourself and for the allergy clinic.

Further information and support for managing allergy in school and early years settings is available at:

[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org) and [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) (allergywise).

### Childcare: nursery/school/family member

- A member of your child’s allergy team, health visiting team or school nurse may provide support.
- Ask is there a “No Nuts” or “No Food Sharing” Policy in place. There is further information available on managing food allergy in nursery on the following website: [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) “Guidance for carers of preschool children attending early year settings”.
- Ask about medicines storage and who will administer emergency medication if this is required. Consider your training needs and that of your child’s nursery/childminder and the use of medications. The allergy nurse or doctor can train the child and family how to use an adrenaline auto injector device (Epipen, Emerade, Jext) and other medication. For training in nurseries, contact the local allergy team or health visiting team for advice.

### Consider risks from potential indoor and outdoor allergens

- Play areas: dust/pollens; school outdoor animals, e.g. chicken eggs; nuts on bird table.
- Craft activities, e.g. junk modelling using food packaging; baking ingredients; nature areas; pet corner.
- Class snack time.
- School trips.
- Packed lunches vs school meals. Discuss with caterer. Provide kitchen staff with a photo of child with list of foods to avoid.
- Supply child with substitute foods: named treat box containing “safe treats” for special occasions, e.g. birthdays.

### Eating out

- Phone ahead to ask if the restaurant can provide safe foods.
- Carry a “chef” card to give allergy information to restaurant staff: [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org) can provide chef cards in different languages [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

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- Ask about hidden foods or unexpected ingredients, e.g. cream added to recipe.
- Stick to simple dishes on menu.
- Be aware of cross contamination of foods in selfserve areas, e.g. buffet table, salad bar.
- Chinese/Thai/Indian foods have high risk of nut contamination and should be avoided if allergic to nuts.

## Travel and holidays

- If you are travelling with a baby: expressed breastmilk, infant formula, cow's milk, milk substitutes, sterilised water, juice and baby food are not subject to the 100ml hand luggage restrictions. Further information: [www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions/baby-foodand-baby-milk](http://www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions/baby-foodand-baby-milk)
- A transparent bag is not required for baby milk or food (powder, bottle, jar), but will need to be available for inspection by security staff if requested.
- 'Reasonable quantity' allowed (to cover stop overs / flight delays) but at the customs officer's discretion.
- Speak to the airline in advance about allowances / restrictions / "free from" meals.
- Some airlines require a Doctor's letter if carrying special foods, adrenaline auto-injectors and liquids (more than 100 ml) e.g. antihistamine syrup and milk formula.
- Translation cards to describe allergies in the local language are available from:  
[www.allergyfreepassport.com](http://www.allergyfreepassport.com)  
[www.yellowcross.co.uk](http://www.yellowcross.co.uk)  
[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)
- Medical ID bracelets, cards and travel containers to protect medicines are available from:  
[www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)  
[www.sotalisman.com](http://www.sotalisman.com)  
[www.friouk.com](http://www.friouk.com)

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