

Customer Care staff – Food Allergy Guidance Notes

Customers at risk from severe food allergies (usually to nuts and peanuts but also to milk, eggs, fish, wheat, sesame, shellfish, soya and many more) need to avoid these foods, often in trace quantities. Even accidental trace contamination may cause them to suffer a severe allergic reaction leading to anaphylaxis or in some cases, life-threatening asthma.



It is very important that they know exactly what is in the food they eat. Many of them know that they should not eat out in restaurants or from takeaways. They look to factory produced foods, and in particular meal solutions, ready to eat and home baking ideas instead.

It is likely that you will receive enquiries:

1. From a customer whose child may have had an allergic reaction and suspects that your product may have caused it
2. From a customer who has eaten your product and believes that it may have triggered allergic symptoms
3. From a customer who has tasted or smelt what they think may be an allergen eg nuts and wants to know more
4. From a customer looking for a product which is free from a particular allergen, or even a list of products which are 'free from' a known allergen

If you receive the first or second types of enquiry, please check that the person is not at any risk and has received medical attention where appropriate.

You should record all available information from the product including bar codes, when and where bought, batch numbers and use by dates. It is important to know whether it is a multipack.

If you take the name and number of the customer, you can get back to them as soon as possible. If they are seriously concerned, they won't mind.

It is important to be sure of any information you give them, and that it is consistent across your business. You should be particularly clear whether the allergen is a deliberate ingredient or a possible contaminant. Customers get very upset when one member of staff tells them something which is then contradicted by another. Ideally, you should check as far back up the food supply chain as you can, and then agree with another colleague what the answer is. You should record what you have said.

And finally: It is very important for allergic customers to be able to **FIND, READ** and **BELIEVE** all ingredients and allergen contamination information. Could they be caught out by your products? What could you do to reduce this risk?

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