

Brakes guide to Allergies

What is a food allergy?

A food allergy is caused by an immune response by the body in reaction to certain foods. A study by the Food Standards Agency has shown that approximately 6% of the UK adult population, over 2 million people, live with a clinically confirmed food allergy. In some people, a food allergy can cause a severe reaction called anaphylaxis. An anaphylactic response can cause the throat to swell, breathing difficulties and if untreated, it can be fatal. Food allergic reactions are most commonly caused by milk, egg, wheat, nuts, peanuts, fish and shellfish.

Intolerance

A food allergy and a food intolerance are not the same. A food intolerance is caused by a reaction to certain foods that does not involve the immune system. An example of food intolerance is reaction to any 'gluten' found in certain cereals like 'wheat' or 'rye', where those suffering from 'coeliacs' disease cannot digest gluten and get severe cramps; and another example is lactose intolerance where lactose, the sugar found in milk, can't be digested.

Brakes labelling

Under EU legislation, the presence of allergens must be highlighted within the ingredients list on our packaging. In Brakes/Sysco branded products, we do this by emphasising the name of the allergen in a **BOLD** font.

There are 14 allergens that must be highlighted, they are:



Caterer's advice

Caterers need to be aware of the following when serving food to a customer with a food allergy or intolerance:

- Emphasise to all staff the importance of accurate allergen information. If unsure, say so and then check, never guess about allergen information
- Check the ingredients list and allergy advice of everything you buy
- Keep a copy of the ingredients list and allergy advice (keep the outer packaging or product specification) of everything you buy so they can be referred to if a customer requests
- Keep a copy of all recipes and any changes made to them
- Keep a record of allergens in regularly bought products
- Suppliers may send a substitute product if the requested product is unavailable. Substitute products may have different ingredients, so always check that the ingredient information used is for the actual product being used
- When storing food, ensure products are still identifiable and that there is a clearly labelled ingredients list and allergen information available for each product
- Store nuts, peanuts and sesame (the allergens most frequently associated with severe reactions) in separate, labelled containers and store them on lower shelves to reduce any risk of contamination
- Cross-contamination during preparation may happen by:
 - Food to food (touching)
 - Food to hand (handling by kitchen staff)
 - Food to equipment (sharing chopping boards)
- Minimise the risk of cross-contamination by:
 - Cleaning hands, work surfaces, kitchen equipment and utensils thoroughly
 - Try to keep certain preparation areas nut-free
 - Only use major allergen containing foods if essential

