

Catering for Food Allergies and Intolerances at School

Food Smart Schools • an naq nutrition program

For more information visit www.foodsmartschools.org or email info@foodsmartschools.org

Adequate nutrition in childhood is essential for growth and development. The food a child consumes while at school contributes significantly to their dietary intake. Schools including tuckshops and canteens, have a role in providing appropriate foods to students to meet their needs. Food allergies and intolerances are becoming increasingly common in children. It is important that schools recognise and cater where necessary, for the nutrition needs of children with allergies.

Included in this fact sheet:

- What is a food allergy?
- Common allergies-
 - Egg
 - Dairy
 - Nuts
- What is food intolerance?
- Common food Intolerances-
 - Lactose
 - Gluten
- Tips for tuckshops & canteens



It's important that food and drinks supplied to children with a food allergy or intolerance are still nutritious and in line with the *Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools*. Smart Choices is a Queensland Government initiative aimed at improving the nutritional value of foods and drinks supplied to students in Queensland schools. Smart Choices is based on the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* and classifies foods and drinks into three categories according to their nutritional value.

GREEN	Have Plenty- encourage and promote these choices
AMBER	Select Carefully- do not let these foods and drinks dominate the choices and avoid large serving sizes
RED	Occasionally- not to be supplied on more than two occasions per term

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What is a Food Allergy?

A food allergy is an adverse response to a food, triggered by the body's immune system. The response may be mild, or more severe, triggering a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. It is advised that children with allergies completely avoid the allergen food.

General advice for accommodating a child's food allergies:

- Be stringent with checking food labels of packaged products to determine whether an allergen ingredient is present. Product formulas and processing methods often change making a previously suitable food unsafe for those with allergies.
- Ingredient lists on packaged products often use different words for allergen containing ingredients. For example albumen and globulin are egg containing ingredients that can appear on product packaging. This can be confusing so contact the manufacturer if you find the ingredients list to be unclear. A list of ingredients to avoid for common allergies is available at: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumerinformation/foodallergies/>
- When preparing and storing allergen free foods, be mindful of cross contamination. Use separate utensils, storage containers and ensure preparation areas are clean to avoid contact with other allergen foods in the kitchen. Make sure you wash your hands before and after handling ingredients containing allergens to prevent contamination.
- Often a child may have multiple allergies/intolerances which limits the types of foods they can be offered and consume. Discussion with the child's parents/carers or support organisations can assist with catering for this child's needs.



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Common Allergies	What to Avoid	Suggestions for Accommodating the Food Allergy
<p>Egg</p>	<p>All food and drinks containing egg and egg-based ingredients.</p> <p>Egg is often used as a binder, emulsifier and colouring agent. Even unsuspecting foods like ice-cream may contain egg.</p> <p>Common foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quiches • omelettes • baked goods with egg • mayonnaise • frozen desserts • custard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs can be successfully replaced in recipes where eggs are a component of the recipe (e.g. muffins, sauces). Use a commercial egg replacer such as Organ Egg Replacer which is a powder-based product • Dishes that include eggs as a key ingredient (e.g. quiche) are unlikely to be successful if made with egg replacers • Instead of using egg to bind mince patty mixtures, try a small amount of breadcrumbs or pureed red kidney beans • Provide egg free sandwich combinations. For sandwich filling ideas see the Food Smart Schools 'Ideas for Sandwich Fillings' fact sheet • Avoid cross contamination of egg in the kitchen by using separate utensils and storing egg free items separately

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Common Allergies	What to Avoid	Suggestions for Accommodating the Food Allergy
<p>Nut</p>	<p>Common nut foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nut butters • nut oils • whole or ground nuts • sauces and condiments • breakfast cereals • biscuits • dried fruit mixes • muesli bars • frozen desserts • some Asian and Indian dishes <p>Being allergic to peanuts does not automatically mean a tree nut allergy.</p> <p>By law in Australia, products which contain peanuts must be clearly labelled. Check the labels of any product used before preparing a nut free item.</p> <p>Some manufacturers will also label their products as may <i>contain traces of nuts</i>. These products need to be avoided as cross contamination can still lead to a severe allergic reaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook with vegetable or olive oil instead of nut-based oils • Flavour foods with tomato based salsas and vinaigrette dressing instead of satay sauces or pesto which may both contain nuts • Nutmeg and coconut are suitable for those with peanut allergy



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Common Allergies	What to Avoid	Suggestions for Accommodating the Food Allergy
Dairy	<p>All dairy-based food and drinks. Dairy-derived ingredients such as whey and casein must also be avoided.</p> <p>Common dairy-based foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• milk (cows, goat, sheep)• cheese• yoghurt• butter• ice-cream• custard• cream• lactose free dairy products• chocolate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use dairy free alternatives such as soy milk for recipes. Check to make sure these milks are enriched with calcium as this is important for growth and bone strength• Use a dairy free margarine spread such as Nuttalex™ as a substitute for butter in baked goods and on sandwiches. Not all margarines are dairy free so check the labels• Only offer soy yoghurts/desserts if they are completely dairy free. Most contain a small amount of dairy which is not suitable for children with a dairy allergy



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What is Food Intolerance?

Food intolerance differs from an allergy because it does not involve the body's immune system. Food intolerance reactions are usually related to the amount of food consumed, it is dose dependent. No symptoms may occur until a certain amount (threshold level) of the food is eaten. Because this threshold varies for each person, different levels of food avoidance are required.

Common Food Intolerances: Lactose and Gluten

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose is a sugar found in milk and milk-based products. Those who need a 'lactose free' diet have problems digesting this sugar. They can experience uncomfortable gut symptoms as a result of eating lactose-containing foods. For most, there is a level of lactose that can be tolerated. This is why children with lactose intolerance may be able to have small amounts of hard cheese and some yoghurts as these are lower in lactose than plain milk and soft cheeses.

It is important that growing children and adolescents consume adequate calcium. For those who are lactose intolerant, calcium-enriched replacement foods can play a very important role in ensuring this occurs.

Suggestions for ensuring adequate calcium in lactose free diets include:

- Replace regular dairy milk with calcium fortified soy milk
- Milkshakes made with soy or calcium fortified low lactose milk (if tolerated)
- Soy yoghurts and custard
- Lactose free yoghurts and custards
- Hard cheeses can be used on sandwiches and in salads

Reduced fat soy drinks are GREEN under the Smart Choices Strategy.

Gluten Intolerance & Coeliac Disease

A child with coeliac disease should avoid all foods that contain gluten. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, triticale, spelt, malt and oats. This means that regular items such as bread, pasta, baked goods and pastries need to be substituted with gluten free alternatives.

It is important to read the labels of all packaged or prepared foods as gluten-containing wheat-derived ingredients are often added to processed products and need to be avoided.

Commercially made gluten free products are now more widely available with staple items such as gluten free bread and flour available at major supermarkets.



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Gluten Free Alternatives – GREEN options

- Gluten free flours for baking e.g. rice, tapioca, potato, soy, all-purpose gluten free
- Gluten free commercial products e.g. bread, pasta
- Rice and corn based dishes
- Commercially-made gluten free breakfast cereals (minimally processed)

You will also need to check the labels of all commercial products (including sauces and stocks) to ensure they are gluten free if required. The Coeliac Society's 'Catering for those with coeliac disease' resource is an easy to use guide that can provide assistance with label reading. See: (<http://www.coeliac.org.au/content/downloads/Catering%20Resource.pdf>)

Remember: fresh fruit, vegetables, milk and lean meats and poultry are all naturally gluten free. These foods are nutritious and GREEN according to Smart Choices.

Managing Allergies and Intolerance - tips for tuckshops and canteens

- You may not need to add extra items to your menu. Adjust regular menu items so that they are free of one or more particular allergens. For example a rice dish and a salad could always be gluten free. These items should be prepared in an uncontaminated area in the kitchen (first thing in the morning also helps).
- Have an open day for parents of children who have allergies and intolerances, to give these parents an opportunity to discuss the menu with you and review food labels and ingredients for themselves.
- Know the products that you sell which contain common allergens.
- Some parents of children in primary school may even wish to provide special foods to the canteen they know is suitable for their child. This way, the child still gets to "experience" lunch from the canteen just like the other kids.

Further Resources for Allergies and Intolerances

The RPA website has a detailed, downloadable shopping list designed specifically for people with allergies to nut, egg and milk. Their website also provides information on allergies and food intolerance:
<http://www.sswahs.nsw.gov.au/rpa/allergy/>

The Coeliac Society: click on the endorsement program tab:
<http://www.coeliacsociety.com.au/endorse.html>

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy - <http://www.allergy.org.au/>

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Banana Muffins

Ingredients (serves 24)

- 7 bananas (very ripe)
- 2 ½ cups pureed apple
- ⅓ cup canola oil
- 1 ¼ cups soy milk
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 ½ cups wholemeal flour
- 2 ½ cups white flour
- 2 ½ tsp baking powder
- Egg replacer (equivalent to 5 eggs- see packet instructions)
- 1 ½ tsp cinnamon

This recipe is Dairy, Egg and Nut Free.

MAKE IT GLUTEN FREE: To make this recipe gluten free use commercial gluten free flour in place of the wheat flours. Check that the baking powder and soy milks are gluten free brands.

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180 °C.
2. Mash bananas.
3. Add apple, oil, soy milk and sugar and mix well.
4. Fold in flours, baking powder, egg replacer and cinnamon.
5. Mix gently – overworking the mixture will make the muffins tough.
6. Grease muffin trays with oil or use patty cases.
7. Spoon mixture into each case and bake for approximately 20 minutes at 180 °C.

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Gluten Free Fried Rice

Ingredients (serves 20)

- 5 cups of uncooked rice
- 5 eggs scrambled
- Spray oil
- 2 cups diced onion
- 2 tsp crushed garlic
- 300g lean mince
- 750g mixed vegetables (fresh or frozen)
- 50mL gluten free soy sauce (e.g. Tamari™)

Method

1. Prepare rice in saucepan/rice cooker as per packet instructions.
2. Scramble eggs in a fry pan and set aside.
3. Spray oil in pan. Fry onion until soft.
4. Add garlic and ham and cook through.
5. Add scrambled egg, and cooked rice.
6. Add mixed vegetables and soy sauce.
7. Stir fry for a few minutes.

This recipe is Gluten and Dairy Free

MAKE IT EGG FREE: Remove the scrambled eggs and substitute for 200g finely diced firm tofu (check label to ensure it's gluten free). Tofu has a neutral flavour.

MAKE IT VEGETARIAN: Substitute ham with tofu or nuts.

When serving this product in the canteen, try serving in noodle boxes and storing in warmer or bain marie. The packaging makes this item popular and may help to increase sales.

Fried rice freezes well, so this is a great recipe for making in advance, just make sure you label the container with and include the date it was prepared.