



**NCASS**<sup>TM</sup>  
NATIONWIDE  
CATERERS  
ASSOCIATION

# Allergen Management

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[www.ncass.org.uk](http://www.ncass.org.uk)



Food allergies are serious. Some people experience an adverse reaction e.g. anaphylactic shock when exposed to allergenic ingredients in certain foods. Severe reactions will require emergency expert help from a trained paramedic, often using injectable adrenaline.

Getting it wrong with allergenic ingredients can be dangerous and, in some cases, life-threatening.

Understanding the ingredients used, providing accurate information about the foods produced and having correct food labelling is critical; you should be doing all you can to produce safe food and keep your customers from danger.

During a routine inspection EHOs will attempt to understand how you effectively manage the following:

### **Allergens Presence:**

- The identification of allergens in ingredients used and menu items that are produced, including checks on food deliveries and an awareness that suppliers may substitute or change ingredients.
- Staff training on food allergen awareness, how to react promptly and deal with food allergies and emergency situations etc.
- Clear communication and in-house procedures for providing information to consumers, dealing with specific requests and providing suitable food orders. For example, compiling an allergen matrix or alternative written system, providing signage for customers on service counters, menus and website.

- Clear Product labelling with allergen ingredients highlighted on prepacked foods, an awareness of the Natasha's Law Requirements for Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) and implementing these for relevant products.

### **Allergen Cross Contamination:**

- Effective cleaning of food contact surfaces and equipment, taking place to minimise the presence of food allergens – including a two-stage cleaning process, and where ever possible the use of disposable use once cleaning cloths/paper towel.
- Clear separation of specific foods during preparation, service and delivery. For example,
- Separate storage and labelling of allergen ingredients and products.
- Where applicable the use of separate designated chopping boards, work surfaces, knives and utensils etc. and planning a suitable space where specific orders could be prepared.
- Consideration for how more complex equipment such as deep fat fryers, toasters, food mixes etc and whether or nor they are suitable for preparing specific orders depending on their other uses/contact with food allergens.
- Personal hygiene measures – steps taken by food handlers to wash hands, change gloves and protective clothing.
- Awareness of food born allergens. For example, using flour, nut powders and spice mixes that remain in the air or are easily spread onto other surfaces, equipment, requiring extra care or prevention.

## Precautionary Allergen Labelling

Precautionary allergen labelling should only be used when a risk of allergen cross-contact within the supply chain is identified that cannot be removed through risk management actions. This should be identified by a risk assessment.

Allergen cross-contamination or cross-contact is when traces of allergens get into products accidentally. This can happen during the processing, manufacturing, handling, transport, or storage of foods.

Your food business can choose wording such as:

- “may contain x”
- “not suitable for consumers with a x allergy”

General or blanket statements, such as “may contain allergens” could be deemed misleading to the consumer, because they are unlikely to be based on an assessment of the risk of cross-contamination for each of the 14 regulated allergens.

Precautionary allergen labelling should not be used in combination with a free-from statement for the same allergen.

A food cannot carry both labels for example “free-from milk” and “may contain milk.”

## Food Safety Management System

EHOs will expect to see relevant allergen control measures documented in the food safety management system.

For NCASS members this will mean the details outlined in their Food Safety Risk Assessments. These can be completed and updated within the online risk assessment tool via the Member Dashboard.

To assist with the management of food allergens, to keep consumers safe whilst demonstrating compliance with the legal requirements, NCASS have included generic control measures within the risk assessment templates for the following hazards:

- Allergen Presence
- Allergen Cross Contamination

Members must familiarise themselves with the control measures in the risk assessment, adapt them where necessary so they are applicable to their business and then ensure they are properly implemented.

Members are advised to have copies of their Food Safety Risk Assessments in their Safety Management System folder so they are readily available to view and to support their routine food safety inspection. An EHO will likely want to review them.

[NCASS offers a training course on Allergen Awareness](#) which is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of allergens in the kitchen and how to manage them effectively. It is suitable for all staff from servers, food handlers to managers and business owners.

It is advisable to include proof that staff have undertaken Allergen Awareness training within the [Safety Management System](#).

## Allergen Training

We recommend you and your staff undertake Allergen Awareness Training to further your awareness of the importance of allergens, their potential risks and how to convey allergen information to customers.

The course will provide vital information on:

- The 14 specified allergens
- The differences between a food allergy, food intolerance and Coeliac disease
- The legal requirements of a business to provide allergen information
- How to review practices to ensure that allergens are managed effectively
- How to minimise and control cross-contamination
- How to communicate the necessary information to customers

And much more!

The course is up to date with all current allergen legislation and can be completed online. Attempts are unlimited, allowing you to be confident that you have fully understood the content, and upon completion you will receive a certificate showcasing your thorough understanding of allergen awareness.

Visit the [NCASS website](#) for more information on our training courses.



## Contact Us

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