

Nuts and the Food Business

A minority of people are unfortunate enough to suffer from a very acute allergic reaction to otherwise harmless foods. Most allergic reactions are to peanuts and nuts. In affected people, a minute quantity of the nut can have rapid and fatal effects unless medical aid is obtained very quickly - in fact, in a matter of minutes.

Most deaths occur where people have eaten out at catering establishments. It is at premises where lists of ingredients are not required to be displayed that anaphylaxis sufferers are at most risk. Non-prepacked food is also a major risk area.

There are steps you can take as an owner or manager of your food business:

- Make sure your staff are aware of the significance of the use of nuts and nut products, and the importance of avoiding contamination of non-nut products - through training sessions, notices, house journals, etc.
- If you use nut or nut oils in a recipe where it is not clear from the name of the food or the list of ingredients that nuts are present, find other ways of passing the information down the distribution chain to the point of sale customer. Why not label it "contains peanuts"?
- If you cook food in nut oil or use oil in which nuts have been coated, again, pass the information down the food chain.
- If you use nuts or nut oils in replacement of, or substitution for, more general ingredients, it is vital that this is known down the food chain.
- If you supply caterers, make sure that your customers know which of your products contain nuts and remind them to retain packaging that may contain important information.
- If you are a restaurateur or caterer, check the complete recipes of all your products so that you can answer questions, and ensure that your staff know where, and how, to access the relevant information, if asked.
- If customers ask if there are nuts in a food and you don't know, suggest that they try something else that you know does not contain nuts.

This leaflet is not an authoritative interpretation of the law and is intended only for guidance.