

Food allergies

Allergy: a condition where an individual's immune system reacts to a normally harmless substance (allergen).

Any substance can be an allergen, including food. An individual who has a food allergy will need to avoid eating (and sometimes any contact with) ingredients they are allergic to. They may also need to avoid any foods that were manufactured in an environment where such allergens are used for other products.

The most common food **allergens** include:



Symptoms of a food allergy may include:

- blocked, itchy or runny nose
- breathlessness, coughing, hoarse voice, noisy breathing and/or wheezing
- diarrhoea
- dizziness or light-headedness
- raised rashes (hives) or itchy skin
- signs of angioedema (swollen eyes, face, lips)
- sneezing
- stomach pain
- vomiting or nausea

Anaphylaxis: a severe allergic reaction that can be life-threatening.

Symptoms of anaphylaxis may include:

- breathing difficulties
- loss of consciousness/collapse
- swollen eyelids
- swollen feet
- swollen hands

Severe anaphylaxis can lead to **anaphylactic shock**.

Treatment may include:

- antihistamines for mild allergic reactions
- adrenaline auto-injectors (eg, EpiPen) for severe allergic reactions

Food intolerances

Food intolerance: a condition where an individual struggles to digest particular foods or ingredients.

A food intolerance differs from a food allergy.

An intolerance is not usually serious, but if an individual eats the food they are intolerant to, it can make them feel unwell.

Food intolerances may relate to **any** type of food or ingredient, eg:



alcohol



caffeine



gluten



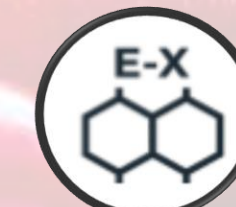
histamine



monosodium glutamate (MSG)



salicylates



sulfites/sulphites

Individuals with food intolerances need to avoid the foods that lead to symptoms.

Symptoms of a food intolerance may include:

- bloating
- constipation
- diarrhoea
- feeling tired or exhausted
- flatulence
- headache
- joint pain
- nausea
- rashes
- stomach pain

Food-related autoimmune diseases

Autoimmune disease: one of a number of conditions that can directly link to diet.

An autoimmune disease is a condition where an individual's own immune system attacks the healthy tissue in their body. The immune system's function is to defend against infection, but for some individuals, their system attacks healthy tissue by mistake.

Crohn's disease

Part of the gut becomes inflamed in response to ingredients or types of food.

Symptoms of Crohn's disease may include:

- blood in stools
- delayed growth/puberty
- diarrhoea
- feeling unwell
- joint pain
- loss of appetite
- mucus in stools
- pain in the anus
- skins rashes
- sore eyes
- stomach pain
- tiredness
- weight loss

Individuals with this condition may need to avoid ingredients or types of food that trigger their symptoms.

These can be different for everyone so always ask individuals about any specific requirements.

Coeliac disease

The immune system attacks an individual's own bodily tissue when they consume gluten. This causes damage to the gut (small intestine), making it less effective at absorbing nutrients.

Short-term symptoms may include:

- bloating
- constipation
- flatulence
- indigestion
- diarrhoea
- stomach aches

Longer-term/more general symptoms may include:

- co-ordination, balance and speech disorders
- delayed growth/puberty
- itchy rashes
- infertility
- nerve damage
- tiredness
- weight loss

Gluten is found in any food that contains barley, rye and wheat, including:

- beer
- breakfast cereals
- cakes
- certain sauces
- most breads
- pastas
- some ready-made meals

Individuals with this condition may need to avoid ingredients or types of food that trigger their symptoms.

Type 1 diabetes

A lifelong autoimmune disease where an individual's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin. Insulin is a hormone that enables the body to use sugar (glucose) for energy.

If an individual's blood glucose level becomes too high, they can experience hyperglycaemia.

If an individual's blood glucose level becomes too low, they can experience hypoglycaemia (hypos).

Type 1 diabetes cannot be controlled through lifestyle changes.

Individuals diagnosed with this condition require lifelong regular insulin injections to control their insulin levels.

Ulcerative colitis

Causes inflammation of the rectum and colon. Small ulcers, which can bleed and produce pus, may also develop on the lining of the colon.

Symptoms of an ulcerative colitis flare-up may include:

- extra-intestinal symptoms (eg, irritated/red eyes, joint pain/swelling, mouth ulcers and bone problems)
- frequent need to pass stools
- recurrent diarrhoea (sometimes containing blood, mucus or pus)
- stomach pain

Individuals with this condition may need to avoid ingredients or types of food that trigger their symptoms.

These can be different for everyone so always ask individuals about any specific requirements.

Eating disorders

Eating disorder: a mental health condition which affects an individual's relationship with food and/or eating. Behaviours linked to eating disorders may include eating too much or eating too little, affecting nutritional intake.

Eating disorders vary from individual to individual but are largely categorised as:

Anorexia nervosa

An eating disorder with a key characteristic being that an individual feels the need to keep their weight as low as possible.

Often known as anorexia.

Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)

An eating disorder where an individual either avoids certain types of foods, limits how much they eat or both. Reasons may include:

- problems with the taste, texture or smell of certain foods
- lack of interest in eating or not feeling hungry
- upsetting past experiences with certain foods, eg, choking or vomiting after eating

Binge eating disorder (BED)

An eating disorder where an individual feels the need to overeat on a regular basis.

Bulimia nervosa

An eating disorder characterised by an ongoing cycle of eating/eating 'too much' within a short space of time (binging) and then ridding the body of that food (purging) and/or a period of not eating.

Often known as bulimia.

Other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED)

An eating disorder where an individual's symptoms do not fit with those of any specific eating disorder. OSFED is the most common eating disorder.

Food aversion

A condition characterised by extreme repulsion against certain foods, ingredients, food-related smells, tastes or textures. Food aversion is sometimes misunderstood as 'picky eating', but it is more serious. In some cases, it may fall under the category of an eating disorder, eg, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID). Food aversion can lead to malnutrition.

Conditions that may affect diet

Allergies

An individual's immune system reacts to a normally harmless substance (allergen). Any food can be an **allergen**, but the most common 14 are celery, cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, egg, fish, lupin (a type of legume), milk (cow/dairy), molluscs, mustard, peanut (a type of legume), sesame, soybean (a type of legume), sulfur/sulphur dioxide and sulfites/sulphites and tree nuts.

Autoimmune diseases

Conditions where an individual's own immune system attacks the healthy tissue in their body. The immune system's function is to defend against infection, but for some individuals, their system attacks healthy tissue by mistake.

Examples include Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and coeliac disease.

Diabetes

An individual's blood sugar (glucose) level becomes too high because of either a lack of insulin or a lack of properly functioning insulin (a hormone that enables the body to use that glucose for energy). Individuals with this condition need to monitor and control their blood glucose levels and closely manage the amount of carbohydrates they consume. If an individual's blood glucose level becomes too high, they can experience **hyperglycaemia**. If an individual's blood glucose level becomes too low, they can experience **hypoglycaemia** (hypos). There are two main types of diabetes: **Type 1 diabetes** and **Type 2 diabetes** as well as **Gestational diabetes** (which typically occurs during pregnancy).

Eating disorders

A mental health condition which affects an individual's relationship with food and/or eating. Eating disorders vary from individual to individual but are largely categorised as:

- anorexia nervosa
- avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)
- binge eating disorder (BED)
- Bulimia nervosa
- food aversion
- other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED)

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)

A wider term for conditions that result in diarrhoea and severe stomach pain (eg, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis).

Intolerances

Individuals struggle to digest particular foods/ingredients. A food intolerance differs from a food allergy. An intolerance is not usually serious, but if an individual eats the food they are intolerant to it can make them feel unwell.

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

A condition that affects an individual's digestive system. Individuals who suffer from IBS often need to avoid certain foods that trigger their symptoms. These can be different for everyone so always ask individuals about any specific requirements. Symptoms of IBS may include bloating, constipation, cramps and diarrhoea.

Non-diabetic hyperglycaemia

A condition where blood sugar (glucose) levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. This may also be known as **Pre-diabetes**.

Nutrients

Nutrient: a substance needed by the body for it to continue to work properly and stay healthy.

Macronutrients (in larger amounts) and **micronutrients** (in smaller amount) are both vital for healthy functioning.

Health issues can occur when the body has either too much or too little (deficiency) of any of these nutrients.

Macronutrients

Carbohydrates

A group of compounds that includes:

- simple sugars (eg, **glucose**)
- complex sugars (eg, **starch**)
- indigestible carbohydrates (eg, **fibre**)

In the right amounts, simple and complex sugars are vital to a healthy diet, providing energy for the body to function. Dietary fibre plays a crucial role in digestive health.

Fats

A group of nutrients that includes:

- monosaturated (eg, in olive oil)
- Polyunsaturated (eg, in oily fish)
- Saturated (eg, in chocolate)
- Trans (eg, in partially hydrogenated vegetable oil)

In the right amounts, fats perform essential bodily functions, eg, absorbing certain vitamins and serving as an energy store. Different types of fat are found in different foods.

Proteins

A group of nutrients that are used by the body for growth and repair.

Proteins form an essential part of a healthy diet. They enable the body to grow and repair itself.

Protein can be found in a number of foods, eg:

- beans
- eggs
- fish
- meat
- pulses

Micronutrients

Vitamins and **minerals** including:

- beta-carotene
- calcium
- copper
- iodine
- iron
- potassium
- sodium
- vitamin A
- B vitamins and folic acid
- vitamin C
- vitamin D
- vitamin E
- vitamin K
- zinc

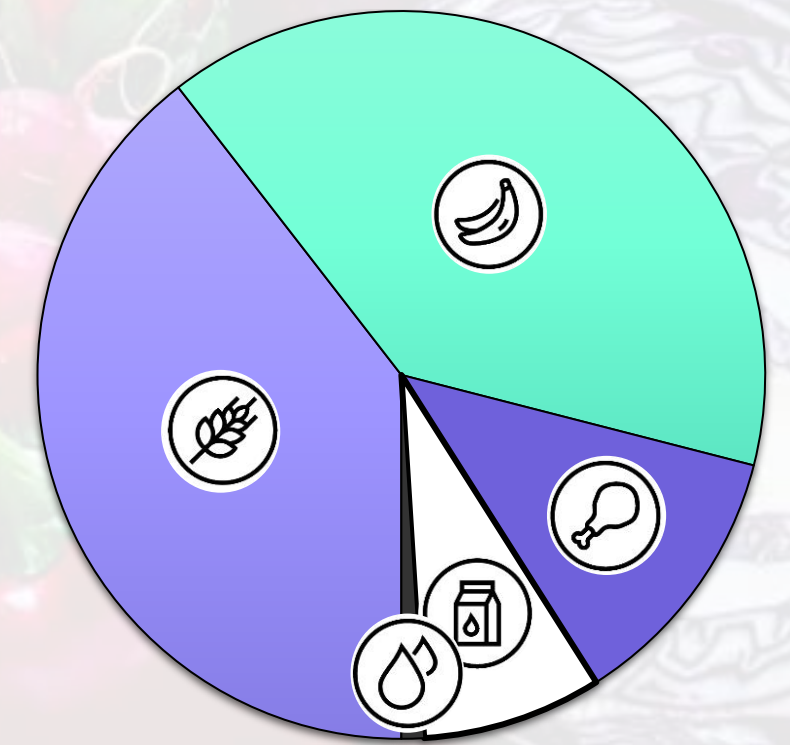
Balanced diet

Balanced diet: a diet that includes a range of foods and nutrients that are needed for an individual to remain healthy. A balanced diet incorporates suitable portions of foods from the five main food groups (fruit and vegetables, starchy carbohydrates, proteins, dairy or dairy alternatives, oils and spreads).

Recommended daily intake (RDI)

A UK government guide to the proportions of different nutrients an individual should consume daily as part of a healthy diet.

- Fruit and vegetables: five portions a day, or just over a third/40%
- Starchy carbohydrates: just over a third/40%
- Proteins: around an eighth/12%
- Dairy or dairy alternatives: around a twelfth/8%
- Oils and spreads: very small amount, around 1%



Fluids: keep the body hydrated. It is recommended that individuals drink six to eight cups of fluid per day.

Fibre: sometimes referred to as 'roughage', fibre is not digested, therefore making its way through the entire digestive system and helping the body to pass stools regularly.

The UK government recommends adults consume 30g of fibre daily (25g for 11- to 16-year-olds and 20g for 5- to 11-year-olds).

Cholesterol: although the body does need some cholesterol, too much can lead to health issues, eg, clogged arteries and heart problems. Cholesterol is broadly considered in two categories:

- 'bad' cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and very low-density lipoproteins (VLDL)
- 'good' cholesterol: high density lipoprotein (HDL) carries excess cholesterol from elsewhere in the body to the liver where it is broken down and disposed of

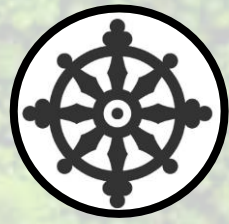
Salt: a small amount of salt in the diet helps the kidneys to control the amount of water in the blood, but too much salt can have negative impacts on health, eg, raised blood pressure.

It is recommended that adults and children over the age of 11 have fewer than 6g/one teaspoon of salt daily (5g for 7- to 10-year-olds, 3g for 4- to 6-year-olds, 2g for 1- to 3-year-olds and 1g for under-1-year olds).

Sugar: a sweet tasting carbohydrate, that in small quantities can form part of a healthy diet. Sugars are also broadly talked about in the following categories:

- total sugars (naturally occurring in some food products)
- free sugars (often naturally occurring, but should be limited as part of a healthy diet)
- added sugars (added during processing and should be limited as much as possible within a healthy diet)

Religion-based diets



Buddhist

Some Buddhists may choose to follow specific dietary practices as part of their faith, eg, vegan or vegetarian diets.



Islamic

Some Muslims may choose to follow specific dietary practices as part of their faith, eg, a halal diet.



Christian

Some Christians may choose to follow dietary practices as part of their faith, eg, avoiding eating meat on Fridays.



Jewish

Some Jewish may choose to follow specific dietary practices as part of their faith, eg, a kosher diet.



Hindu

Some Hindus may choose to follow specific dietary practices as part of their faith, eg, a vegetarian diet or a diet that avoids beef.



Sikh

Some Sikhs may choose to follow specific dietary practices as part of their faith, eg, a vegetarian diet.

Halal diet

Eating food that has been prepared and is classified as in line with Islamic law. This includes the method by which animals are slaughtered.



Fasting

To go without food for long periods of time. There are different reasons for fasting. Some individuals may choose to fast as part of their religious practices.

Kosher diet

Eating food that has been prepared and is classified as in line with Jewish law. This includes the prohibition on eating certain fish, meat and seafood, the separation of milk and meat products in meals, and a requirement for animals to be slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law.



It is always advisable to discuss and confirm any religion-based dietary practices with individuals.

Lifestyle-based diets

Diet: the food, drink and nutrients that an individual consumes. Other uses of the word include:

- the practices of an individual's food and drink consumption (eg, a vegan diet)
- 'dieting'/'on a diet' to describe the conscious restriction of nutritional intake



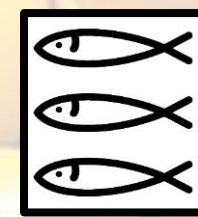
Omnivorous diet

A diet that includes both plant-based and animal-based food products.



Vegan diet

A diet based on plant-based food products (eg, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts and fruits). Vegans do not eat any animal products, including dairy, eggs, honey and meat.



Pescatarian diet

A diet that excludes all meat except fish.



Vegetarian diet

A diet that does not include fish or meat. Unlike vegans, vegetarians may eat some animal products, including dairy products and eggs.