

NEW food allergy legislation

From Dec 13th 2014 all food providers will have to inform customers what is in their food! This is nothing to do with Ofsted or DfE – it's from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in conjunction with DEFRA. While *some* Ofsted inspectors *might* check you are doing it, the legislative body is the Food Standards Authority – your Local Environmental Health Dept.

All childminders must be registered with Environmental Health – note that if you registered as a childminder before Jan 2014 you should have informed your EHO that you are providing food for children; if you registered as a childminder after Jan 2014 Ofsted will have registered you.

All childminders should be using 'Safer Food better Business for Childminders' – print friendly version here - food allergy pages 19 and 20 –

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/publication/sfbbwebfriendlychilminders0513.pdf>

Most childminders are food providers – if you either include food in your fees or ask parents to pay extra for meals then you sell food and you are a food provider. If you ask parents to bring packed lunches and do not cook anything for tea or provide snacks (just giving water through the day) then you are probably not a food provider...

We will need to think about how to comply with the requirements. There is a useful training course (with certificate at the end). Our chef has done it and says it's really simple once you get your head round it - <http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/english/>.

The 14 allergens we need to inform parents about are:

- Cereals containing gluten – most cereals unless labelled 'gluten free'
- Crustaceans – crab, lobster, prawns, scampi
- Molluscs - mussels, land snails, squid and whelks
- Eggs - found in all sorts of places you wouldn't expect them!
- Fish – watch out for fish in sauces and stock
- Peanuts – they get everywhere so check labels carefully
- Nuts – other nuts – note that peanuts are often used as a filler in nut products which is why they say 'may contain nuts'
- Soya – found in lots of vegetarian products
- Milk - butter, cheese, cream, milk powders, milky puddings like fromage frais and yoghurt
- Celery – found in salads as well as meat products
- Mustard - liquid, powder and seeds
- Sesame – bread, breadsticks, sesame oil
- Lupin – found in flour and used as seeds on top of bread
- Sulphur dioxide (at a level above 10mg/kg or 10mg/litre)

The Food Standards Agency have produced lots of documents to help us –

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2014/6140/sme-allergen-guidance>.

This is a useful poster to share with parents and display on your noticeboard -

<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/432978951648077865/>.

This is quite eye catching as well -

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/publication/thinkallergy.pdf>.

The new legislation will make it much easier to cater for children who have allergies. Instead of wondering what is in food you buy at the shops or market, you will be able to see allergens immediately because they will be in **bold** on labels. When you are out and about and buying food, providers must be able to tell you exactly what it is in the food they are selling.

This is a good leaflet to download and read -

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/publication/loosefoodsleaflet.pdf>.

How to provide the information to parents...

I think most childminders will add information to their menus (but you don't have to – there are other options). The EYFS says that we must inform parents about food provided for their child and a menu is the easiest and quickest way of doing this. So you might say –

Monday

Breakfast – cereal with milk; fresh fruit; drink of fruit juice

Allergens – gluten, milk

Morning snack – breadsticks with hummus; fresh fruit; drink of free nursery milk.

Allergens – gluten, milk

Lunch – shepherds pie; mixed vegetables; apple crumble; drink of water

Allergens – egg and milk (in potato), fish (in Worcester sauce), gluten and nuts (in crumble topping)

Afternoon snack – toast and spread; fresh fruit; drink of water

Allergens – gluten

Tea – chicken stir fry; mixed vegetables; yoghurt; drink of water

Allergens – nuts (groundnut oil), milk

Once you have written your weekly menu you won't need to re-do it for a few months until you change it (ours are updated seasonally) and you will be able to copy and paste / reuse the information next time because you will find that the staple foods you buy week after week don't really change that much.

OR... Some childminders might find it easier to put together a recipe folder rather than sharing the information on their menus ... you will only need to write breakfast and snacks once and then think about what main meals you provide for lunch and tea and add allergy details to the end of the recipe.

OR... You can display your daily menu on a noticeboard or chalk board and write on it what allergens are in the food so parents see it when they come to collect – there is a good example in the leaflet on the previous page.

OR... you can inform parents that you are complying with the requirements by being happy to verbally share information about what is in their children's food and drinks! All the information about food contents is online on the supermarket websites to make it easier.

BUT – if you choose this option you will have to back up verbal information in writing if requested by a parent or Environmental Health Officer.

If you are out and about...

If you buy food in a café or other food outlet they will be required to comply with the new regulations as well. I suggest you add information to your 'eating out with children risk assessment*' to say that you will ask about food contents before buying food for children ...

*If you don't have a written risk assessment, add this advice to the 'list of things to do on outings' that you keep in your head!

A group member has already shared what she is doing to comply with the requirements – by starting early she has 3 months to write up her menus and check the contents of her food before the Dec 13th start date - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/independentchildminders/810240518997357/>.

Non-compliance will result in large fines apparently ... so it will be important that we are all prepared to provide this information to parents from December 13th. If you have any concerns please ask!