

Shopping with **FOOD ALLERGIES**

Getting diagnosed with a food allergy is life changing, I sometimes felt quite overwhelmed when my son got diagnosed with multiple food allergies as a toddler, this guide has been put together to give some useful advice on how to handle your first few shopping trips.



Kirsty X

What's the law?

FOOD ALLERGIES ON PACKAGING

- ♡ 14 major allergens must be listed or highlighted on all packaged foods.
- ♡ These allergens are: dairy, egg, peanuts, tree nuts, soya, gluten, fish, sesame, crustaceans, molluscs, lupin, sulphites, mustard, celery.
- ♡ Even if the ingredient used is unfamiliar, the actual allergen must be listed after it e.g. Casein (Milk), Bulgar (Wheat).
- ♡ Loose & non-packaged foods, like food in sandwich stores & in store bakeries don't have to list allergens in full, as long as the information is available.

'MAY CONTAIN' STATEMENTS

These are voluntary statements, so their absence doesn't rule out cross-contamination.

These statements means that even if you or your child have eaten a product before without reaction, it could be contaminated in the future.

So many foods carry these statements before many allergens can be airborne, so if an ingredient is handled in a factory at all it could cause cross contamination. It can be helpful to talk to the manufacturer to understand the level of risk.

APPS & WEBSITES to help

Here are a few tools to make checking products allergens & writing your shopping list a little easier, though it's important to always check the label yourself.

FOOD MAESTRO APP

Developed in partnership with the NHS allows you to set up allergy profiles for everyone in your family, and scan product barcodes to detect ingredients you can't have. You can also browse product categories for products which are free of allergies- but currently it can't advise where to buy these products.

SPOON GURU APP

Allows you to scan product barcodes, but seems to have fewer products in its database. Spoon Guru also has allergen free recipes for you to try.

WEBSITE FILTERS

MySupermarket allows you to search for Gluten & Dairy free products across multiple retailers, though not all products are picked up by its filters

OCADO: Allow you to filter products by gluten free, wheat free, milk free, egg free, lactose free and soya free, and select multiple allergens at the same time. In our experience most relevant products are picked up by these filters

SAINSBURYS: dedicated free-from sections, but a limited filter function, only Nut free & Gluten free covered.

MORRISONS: Have a gluten free filter and also have Gluten Free, Milk Free, Lactose free & Dairy free specific sections

TESCOS: Have free-from options in each menu and a filter for allergies when looking at a 'shelf' however frustratingly this filter only allows one allergy to be selected at a time

ASDA: have a free-from menu easily listed on the front page but don't currently have the function to filter products by allergen.

Step by Step ADVICE

- 1. Pre-plan your weekly menu**, this will help you focus on what you need, and hopefully stop you feeling overwhelmed.

Then use apps & website filters to help you build your shopping list, this will allow you to go into store with a clear plan of action

Until you build confidence heading into store allows you to check all product labels, whilst online shopping gives less control, as recipes may have changed.

- 2. Watch the Salts, Sugars & Saturated Fats**

Not all free-from foods are the same, whilst we strive to make our food as healthy as it can be, some free-from food can be nutritionally poor.

- 3. Read every label, every time**

Make sure you check the packaging every time you buy something, responsible manufacturers should highlight allergen changes on front of pack, but this isn't always done.

Therefore it is best to read the label when it goes in your shopping trolley and also train everyone in the house to read the label before you eat it.

SUPPORT FORUMS

Support groups can be so helpful in getting answers to questions and tips from people who are going through similar experiences and also, not to be underestimated, in getting some emotional support, here's a few we know of:

CMPA (Cow's Milk Protein Allergy) facebook group, I'm a long term member and with over 32k members this group is a great support & advice network helping members throughout diagnosis, sharing experiences and also sharing any news like new products launches.

Other groups on facebook with big follower numbers are **Celiac Disease support group** (22k members), **Gluten free, Dairy free, Kids diet support** (8.9k members) and **Dairy & Soy free support** (6.2k members)

Additional support resources can be found on **Allergy UK** and <https://www.foodsmatter.com>



WHERE To Buy



Morrisons - Dedicated free-from areas for both ambient & chilled & frozen food make Morrisons an easy shop.



Tescos - The long-standing market leader in free-from foods & still have the widest range across allergens.



Sainsburys - Good range, focused on options with the allergen removed, rather than alternatives which are naturally free-from the allergen.



Asda - A rapidly expanding range with some innovations, but still a bit harder to buy all your free-from shopping list from.



Ocado - A real pioneer in this sector, often stocking brands and products that you won't see elsewhere.



Waitrose - Some reduction of range and store in space for Free-From products over the past 12 months.



Co-op - A rapidly developing range, but the scale of it very much depends on which store you visit and a lot of the range focuses on gluten free only.

Online stores like **Goodness Direct** also has an excellent range with lots of choice.

Aldi & Lidl both are developing free-from ranges, and can have one off 'Gluten free' weeks, but it is still difficult to do your full shop.

This guide is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor or health professional

