

FOOD ALLERGIES, INTOLERANCES & RESTRICTIONS

Version 5.0e Last Up-dated 01 April 2010 ©GMP Systems, Year 2010

This Policy will address the procedures to be taken to ensure the provision of adequate and nutritious diets to those service users with food allergies or intolerances, or where certain foodstuffs have been forbidden for reasons of clinical diet, religion or culture.

A: DEFINITIONS & BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. An **ALLERGY** is a specific response by the body's immune system to a substance (eaten, touched or inhaled) which it mistakenly identifies as harmful.

Contact with this substance triggers the release of histamine, a chemical released by the cells of the body's immune system. This causes contraction of the muscles around the air passages (an attack of breathlessness or asthma), local swelling, skin irritation and if serious enough, a drop in blood pressure.
2. The most severe allergic reaction is **ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK** or **ANAPHYLAXIS**. The body becomes flooded with histamine causing immediate swelling of the air passages, mouth and throat, a rapid drop in blood pressure, and loss of consciousness. Anaphylaxis is life-threatening but can be treated through the speedy administration of adrenaline / epinephrine to counteract the release of histamine.
3. Elderly and malnourished persons and children can have particularly vulnerable immune systems compared to normal healthy adults and are therefore more susceptible to allergic reactions. Over 90% of food-allergic reactions are caused through contact with the following foods:
 - peanuts
 - tree nuts (walnuts, pecans etc)
 - fish
 - shellfish
 - milk
 - soy / soya products
 - eggs
 - wheat / wheat products
4. It is also possible for persons to suffer adverse reactions to certain foods which have not sparked an immune system response. These responses are normally classed as **INTOLERANCES** or **SENSITIVITIES** and have a very wide range of causes, symptoms and degrees of severity. However, they nearly always manifest as part of some other condition or illness.

B: PROCEDURES:

1. The preliminary Baseline Assessment of Needs of a prospective service user will have identified details of any special dietary needs that the person may have. This will address:
 - food allergies, intolerances and sensitivities;
 - foods prohibited for clinical reasons, e.g. as a result of a special diet etc;
 - foods forbidden by reasons of religion or culture (*ref Form No 3-14 for a complete summary*).

This information is noted in the service users's records and passed to kitchen staff for their records.
2. Within the kitchen environment, kitchen staff receive special training in food allergies. An essential part of this training requires staff to be knowledgeable of the ingredients in purchased ready-to-eat foods, and to retain a list of ingredients of all dishes prepared by kitchen staff from raw ingredients.