



Special Dietary Requests

Please read this information before completing the dietary request form.

Definitions

We recognise that a growing number of people have dietary requirements and these fall into four categories.

1. Food intolerance or sensitivity is the most common dietary diagnosis and occurs when someone has difficulty digesting certain foods and having an unpleasant physical reaction to them. Symptoms include bloating, stomachache, diarrhoea, irritable bowel, headaches, cough, runny nose, feeling under the weather, rash and hives. It is unpleasant but rarely serious and GPs will often ask sufferers to abstain from a food for several weeks to identify the source of a reaction.

2. Food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts to specific foods by mistakenly treating proteins as a threat. This releases chemicals such as histamine into the system which at high levels can lead to anaphylaxis; difficulty breathing and low blood pressure. Symptoms include wheezing or shortness of breath, feeling dizzy and lightheaded, itchy sensation in mouth, throat raised itchy red rash or "hives" swelling of the face, around the eyes, lips, tongue and roof of the mouth, nausea or vomiting, difficulty swallowing, abdominal pain or diarrhoea, hay fever-like symptoms - sneezing or itchy eyes. Severity ranges from mild to life threatening and sufferers will normally carry an adrenaline auto-injector and antihistamine. Although Coeliac sufferers experience an auto immune response to gluten this does not result in an allergic reaction but rather the immune system attacks the lining of the gut. For this reason, it is classified as a disease rather than an allergy.

3. Medical diet is required, for example, when someone has diabetes or a GP prescribes low salt, low fat, high or low fibre, low carbohydrate foods to address a specific medical condition.

4. Lifestyle diet is requested when a person chooses to abstain from certain foods for religious, cultural, ethical or environmental reasons. Examples being vegetarian, vegan, halal and kosher. Although not an illness we still ask that the Medical Centre is kept informed to ensure pupils maintain a healthy, balanced diet.

It is important to take the following information into consideration when making a dietary request.

The School cannot guarantee a completely allergen free environment. We can however minimise the risk of exposure by hazard identification, instruction and information. Those with food allergies or intolerances will develop a better awareness and understanding of how to manage their own diet in an environment where hazards may be present. This will encourage self-responsibility to all those with known allergens to make informed decisions on food choices.

At primary or prep school children's diets are often managed through the pre-plating system. However, when moving up to Senior School meals are mainly self-service with cafeteria-style counters so consideration must be given to how the diet will be served and collected. New

pupils joining the School in First and Second Forms are supported at meal times by the two Junior Matrons who are on hand to assist them in managing their diets.

As with most kitchens in the UK we do not have a designated space for producing special dietary requirements. And since we handle most allergens there does remain some risk of cross contamination. If those with a severe food allergy or intolerance are trace sensitive, they should pre-order a plated meal which will enable the chefs to take additional precautions in minimising cross contamination. Even using the wrong serving utensil on the servery could spread an allergen from one dish to another.

The Anaphylaxis Campaign advises against claiming to be a “nut free zone” which could create a false sense of security. We do not intentionally use nuts as an ingredient or any product containing nuts. However, some products in our stores do come with a ‘may contain nut traces’ or “produced in an environment handling nuts” disclaimer. For this reason, those suffering from a nut allergy should still order and collect a pre-plated ‘nut free’ special diet so our chefs can avoid any “may contain” ingredients.

Making a special dietary request

Juniors

Junior pupils need to complete a dietary request form as part of their enrolment medical. For the best possible care, copies of any test results or relevant documents should be provided. A face-to-face meeting will be arranged with the Catering Team, Medical Centre and Junior Matrons to agree the diet and service arrangements at meal times. Juniors can pre-order menu choices through their matron a week in advance and must liaise with the matrons if they are on trips or playing away matches so appropriate meals or refreshments can be included.

Seniors and Staff

The procedure for seniors is broadly the same as juniors but without involvement from the junior matrons. From Third Form seniors have the option of self-managing their diet at meal times or pre-ordering a plated meal from the Catering Team by email (catering@svs.org.uk). Boarders can do this through their house matron if preferred. If the condition is serious or the pupil is trace sensitive, a plated meal provides the greatest level of safety and lowest risk of cross contamination. To assist in planning and ordering a pre-plated meal, the School menu is uploaded on the [website](#) each week.

For pupils, staff and visitors choosing not to pre-order their meal a menu identifying the presence of 14 allergens is on display in the servery each mealtime. Although it is a legal requirement to identify the presence of these 14 allergens there are many more potentially problem foods not included on the displayed menu. So, if you need further information about the presence of a problem food in a dish, ask a member of staff before selecting your meal.

Visitors

Send a dietary request form to your event organiser and the Catering Team as early as possible. Make yourself known to a member of the service staff on the day and communicate clearly your food allergy. Only eat the food on offer if you are content that the person you have informed about your food allergy has clearly understood everything you have communicated.

Areas of responsibility

The risks of eating food prepared by others can be reduced greatly through communication. It is the responsibility of the person with the food allergy to communicate fully with the School and ensure that the correct steps are carried out to reduce as many of the risks as possible.

Making the dietary request

- Register dietary requirements with the Medical Centre at the earliest opportunity;
- Provide copies of test results and relevant medical correspondence;
- Notify the Medical Centre of any changes or update in diagnosis;
- Always refer to the allergy menu on display by the main servery;
- Never guess, assume or take a risk - always ask to speak with the duty chef;
- Pre-order a plated meal if the condition is serious or you are trace sensitive and do not deter;
- Pupils must attend an annual review with the Catering Team and Medical Centre each September.