

Catering for children with allergies

How Juniper Ventures plans, checks and serves meals for children with a food allergy, intolerance or medical diet.

Across our schools we currently cater for more than 350 children on a medical diet. Most of them have more than one allergy, and many have a combination of allergies alongside other medical needs. Around a third carry an adrenaline pen.

FROM THE FORM TO THE PLATE

1

The school tells us

You give the school medical evidence of your child's allergy, such as a letter from your GP or allergy clinic, and the school keeps that on record. The school then sends us an allergen referral form. All we need from it is your child's name and what they cannot have. Twice a year, before each new menu cycle, the school sends us an updated list of every child on a medical diet, because allergies at this age can change.

2

Our dietitian writes the menu

The menu is written for your child alone, using the recipes their own school kitchen works to, so every dish on it is one that kitchen actually cooks.

3

Every dish is checked

Each dish across the three week cycle is checked against your child's allergies, one at a time, and then checked again independently before it leaves us.

4

You read it and sign it

The menu comes to you to agree. Nothing is served from it until your signed form has come back to us. If you would like to talk it through first, you can ask the school for a meeting with our dietitian.

5

The kitchen serves it

The menu goes to the catering area manager and to the school kitchen, who hold a copy and serve your child from it rather than from the general menu.

A registered dietitian writes every menu

Juniper employs a Registered Dietitian, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. Dietitian is a protected title in the United Kingdom, which means it can only be used by someone who holds that registration and who is bound by its professional standards.

No menu for a child with an allergy, intolerance or medical diet is put in place without that check.

We read the recipe, not just the label

For every dish we read the full ingredient list and the cooking method, not only the allergen box, because an allergen can enter a dish at the point it is cooked.

Where a dish can be made safe by leaving out or changing one part of it, that is what we do, so that your child eats as close to the same meal as everyone else as we can manage. Replacing the whole meal is the last option.

What the kitchen displays

Every Juniper kitchen puts up an allergen information sheet covering the whole menu cycle, showing which of the fourteen major allergens each dish contains. We declare celery, cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, eggs, fish, lupin, milk, molluscs, mustard, nuts, peanuts, sesame, soya and sulphur dioxide.

Ingredients and supplier recipes change, so we check the product information again whenever a recipe or a product changes, and we rewrite any menu it affects.

Who looks after it

Your child's menu is not one person's job. Our dietitian writes and checks it, our health and nutrition team oversee the food and the products behind it, and our health and safety team work with the school on how it is handled and served.

We work with the school rather than around it. The school holds the medical information and tells us what changes; we hold the menus and tell them what we have put in place.

The kitchen team know your child

The kitchen holds a copy of your child's menu and the cook knows which child it belongs to. They are not reading a general list, they are serving a named child a meal that was written for them.

If anything on a day is unclear, the kitchen speaks to our dietitian directly rather than making a judgement at the counter.

Our kitchens are nut free

We never cook with nuts or peanuts in any of our kitchens. Trace contamination in bought ingredients cannot be fully ruled out, so we say so plainly rather than promise what we cannot.

If something changes

If your child's allergies change, or a new allergy is diagnosed, please tell the school as soon as you can and give them the medical evidence for it. They will send us a new form and we will rewrite the menu. Any question about your child's menu can go to the school office, who will raise it with us.