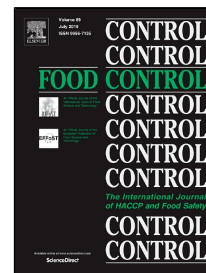


# Accepted Manuscript

'No nuts please': Food allergen management in takeaways

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# 'No nuts please': Food allergen management in takeaways

## Abstract

There is an increasing number of food allergic reactions occurring in food services including takeaways. This study investigated the food allergy knowledge, attitude and practices of staff in takeaways. Although more than half of the takeaways' staff (n=28) demonstrated good food allergy knowledge, there still exists some misunderstanding among the respondents. There were confusion about lactose intolerance and milk allergy, a third of the takeaways' staff were uncertain that hands could transfer allergens. Almost half of the respondents were not aware of the danger of offering water to dilute a food allergen to stop the reaction. Experienced staff and managers / owners reported more positive attitude and higher frequency of good food allergen management practices. Respondents also strongly agreed that customers should inform staff if they have food allergies. However, takeaways' staff would enquire customers if they need allergen information when taking orders over the telephone. Clear communication between front service staff, customers and kitchen crew are important and should be established and meals verified with cooks to ensure safe meals are prepared. Managers or owners should also strongly encourage their staff to participate in food allergy training. Food Standards Agency has set up a free food allergy online training that would be a valuable addition to food businesses.

**Keywords:** attitude; food allergy; food handlers; knowledge; practices

## Highlights

- 43% (12) of takeaways' staff would mistakenly offer water to dilute a food allergen to stop the reaction
- Takeaways' staff unanimously agreed it is customers' responsibility to inform them of their food allergies
- Managers and owners were confident they can handle a food allergy emergency in the takeaways compared to kitchen crew

## Introduction

Food allergy is an adverse immune reaction that occurs upon exposure to specific food and the reactions are reproducible (Moore, Stewart, & deShazo, 2017). The prevalence of food allergy is on the rise globally and affects up to 4% adults and 6% children worldwide (Boye, 2012). Peanuts are one of the top 10 foods responsible for the majority of food allergies in the United Kingdom (UK). In fact, peanut allergy among children in the UK has doubled in the last 10 years and is approximately 1.5% (Immune Tolerance Network, 2017). Food allergy symptoms can range from mild (e.g. resulting in hives and itching) to severe symptoms (e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, wheezing) or even cause life-threatening anaphylactic reactions. Each year in the UK, 10 patients die from food-induced

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