

# Babergh Foodwise



ISSUE 15

## Make sure your business isn't an allergy victim



**W**ith figures showing around ten people die each year in the UK from food-induced anaphylaxis - Babergh is urging people to make sure their business isn't the cause.

Food allergy and food intolerance are both types of 'food sensitivity'.

When someone has a food allergy their immune system reacts to a particular food as if it isn't safe. This reaction can make them very ill. People can be allergic to one or more foods.

If someone has a severe food allergy this can cause a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis (pronounced 'anna-fill-axis'). Anaphylaxis affects the whole body, often within minutes of eating the food.

Food intolerance doesn't involve the immune system and is generally not life-threatening. But if you eat a food you are intolerant to this could make you feel ill or affect your long-term health.

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EU law requires food manufacturers to label foods if they contain any of the 14 main allergens, which are:

- celery
- cereals containing gluten (wheat, barley, rye and oats)
- crustaceans (such as lobster and crab)
- eggs
- fish
- lupin flour
- milk
- molluscs
- mustard
- nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts
- peanuts
- sesame seeds
- soybeans
- sulphur dioxide and sulphites (preservatives used in some foods and drinks) at levels above 10mg per kg or per litre

However, the above allergens (and others) can be hidden in foods sold loose or meals provided by caterers - here are some examples:

- Peanut flour may be used to thicken curries
- Dried fruits often contain sulphur dioxide to retain colour e.g. apricots
- Ingredients such as ginger or lemongrass may be sold in a soya or nut-based carrier oil
- Coconut and pine nuts are not themselves allergens but are often processed in the same factories as allergenic nuts and therefore should be avoided by nut allergy sufferers
- Wok cooking in Chinese/Thai restaurants is a particular problem as the woks tend to be just wiped between different dishes so allergens may be 'carried over'.

### Babergh's advice to businesses:

- Use nominated suppliers where possible so that you get consistent product - on delivery look out for suppliers 'substituting' products. Have a contingency if you run out of something (don't just grab something from the local supermarket)
- Where foods are decanted for storage, keep the label. Don't top-up containers and clean between uses.
- Avoid cross-contamination during preparation.
- On self-service counters ensure sufficient utensils are available and monitor that they are not used in different foods. Label foods, ensure supervising staff are allergy-aware.
- Takeaway premises - staff taking orders must be allergy aware and make certain that any instructions from customer are passed onto kitchen staff.



■ When a customer states that they have an 'allergy' it is a good idea to ask how severe the allergy is. Sometimes it may be an intolerance (where they need to avoid the food to avoid unpleasant, though not life threatening symptoms) or in some cases it may be that they just don't like the food! You then know how careful you need to be, or in the case of severe, life-threatening allergy, you may even decide that you do not feel able to provide food that is definitely going to be safe.

## Courts hand out stiff penalties

Two recent legal decisions (Environmental Health News 12th March 2010) demonstrate how serious the consequences of food allergies can be, both for the sufferers and the businesses involved:

■ In January, the Court of Appeal upheld an award to the widow of Kuldip Singh Bhamra, who died in 2003 from an allergic reaction after eating food served at a Sikh wedding in Forest Gate, east London. Mr Bhamra, who was severely allergic to eggs, collapsed with anaphylaxis after eating a ras-malai dessert, even though temple rules forbid the serving of eggs. Newham EHOs investigated. Mr Bhamra's widow will receive £415,000.

■ On the same day, Mr Su Yung Chow, trading as the New China House Takeaway Restaurant, Chesterfield pleaded guilty to Chesterfield Magistrates to supplying unsafe food. Mr Chow had failed to declare the presence of peanuts in spare ribs to a peanut allergic customer, even though the customer had asked for a meal without nuts. The customer suffered a severe allergic reaction. Mr Chow was fined £2,660 and ordered to pay £1,200 in costs and compensation.

For more information on food allergies visit the FSA website:  
[http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/#h\\_4](http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/#h_4)

# How clean is your business?



Five star performance . . . staff at Andrew's Quality Butchers, in Hadleigh, receive their 5 Star Certificate.

## Do your staff need training in food hygiene?

Make sure your staff are suitably trained to handle food by taking part in a Babergh District Council-run training course. Officers are hoping to start running the CIEH Level 2 Food Safety in Catering course at Babergh's Corks Lane HQ, probably from early summer 2010 onwards. This course, which takes 6 hours teaching time, covers the following topics:



- Legislation
- Food safety and hygiene hazards
- Temperature control
- Refrigeration, chilling and cold holding
- Cooking, hot holding and reheating
- Food handling
- Principles of safe food storage
- Cleaning
- Food premises and equipment

Delegates understanding is assessed by a multiple choice examination. If you would like to attend a course, or have a number of staff who need training and would like to host a course at your premises, contact the Food and Safety Team on 01473 825888 or email [food.safety@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@babergh.gov.uk)

Babergh's Scores on the Doors scheme is going from strength-to-strength with more than 300 certificates being issued since the scheme began last year. More than 56 per cent of those issued so far have been for four and five star certificates - with officers making hundreds of visits to businesses across the district.

Here is a breakdown of all ratings issued:

| Number of stars | Number of premises |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| *****           | 91                 |
| ****            | 81                 |
| ***             | 77                 |
| **              | 34                 |
| *               | 20                 |
| no stars        | 5                  |

Babergh has received only a handful of complaints from businesses that have been unhappy with a score and all have been resolved.

The most common complaint is from businesses which have made improvements since the original inspection and wish to be re-scored.

Babergh's policy is that a rescoring will not take place in case temporary improvements are made - leaving the public with an untrue picture of hygiene standards across the district. Instead Babergh offers businesses the 'right to reply', where they can submit a short statement describing the improvements made which we will then display alongside the star rating on our website. Babergh is always happy to offer advice to businesses on how they can make improvements ahead of the next routine inspection. If you would like some advice over the telephone or an advisory visit, give us a call.

### How was it for you?

Have you received your first star rating? Are you pleased or disappointed? If you wish to comment on the scheme contact the the Food and Safety Team on 01473 825888 or email [food.safety@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:food.safety@babergh.gov.uk)

# Campylobacter cases are on the increase

**B**abergh District and Ipswich Borough Councils have seen a higher than normal number of reported cases of Campylobacter for the first few months of 2010. The reasons for this are unclear, and we have been doing some enhanced investigation to try and find out what could be behind the increase.

Campylobacter facts:

- Campylobacter is the commonest form of bacterial food-borne disease in the UK. 49,880 cases were reported in 2008 compared to just 9,867 cases of Salmonella
- It can be found in unpasteurised milk, poultry, red meat and shellfish
- A Food Standards Agency survey in 2007/8 found 65% of chickens on retail sale in the UK to be contaminated with Campylobacter
- Non-food sources include many animals and birds, and river/stream water contaminated by sewage
- Illness begins 1-10 days after infection
- Causes diarrhoea and often severe stomach pains



What can food businesses do to prevent Campylobacter infection?

- Thorough cooking of food will kill Campylobacter
- Even small numbers of bacteria can cause an infection, so prevention of cross-contamination is vital, eg
- Use separate work surfaces and utensils for raw and ready-to-eat foods
- Wash hands thoroughly between handling raw and ready to eat foods
- Use a food grade sanitising chemical regularly on food-contact and hand-contact surfaces. If it is a chemical which you have to dilute, make sure it is being used at the correct concentration

And finally, look after yourself - avoid putting your hand to your mouth when handling raw meat and poultry - it is surprisingly easy to infect yourself with Campylobacter! For more information on Campylobacter visit the Health Protection Agency's website at [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)