Focus

The newsletter of

Food Allergy and Intolerance Week Special

The leading medical charity for people with

Allergy, Food Intolerance and Chemical Sensitivity
Welcome to Focus

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Paul Robinson

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Newly endorsed products

HELPLINE
01322 619898

The Newsletter of Allergy UK

Allergy UK is a national medical charity established to increase understanding and awareness of allergy and intolerance, to help people manage their allergies and to provide training in allergy for healthcare professionals.

Please send your letters, questions and stories to:

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LEFA Business Park
Edgington Way, Sidcup, Kent
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Allergy UK is the operational name of The British Allergy Foundation, a Charitable Company Limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales.
Company No: 4509293.
Charity No: 1094231
Registered in Scotland - Charity No: SCO39257
I hope you’ve had a wonderful festive break. Christmas is a fantastic time to relax with friends and family, and, of course, indulge a little. But for people with a food allergy or an intolerance, it can be a stressful time, especially when everyone around you is having fun. At Allergy UK, we understand all too well the challenges you face and would like to remind you that you are not alone.

Food Allergy and Intolerance Week runs 23-29 January 2012 and is supported by foodsyoucan.co.uk. In this issue read one family’s personal experience of parenting a child with a severe food allergy. We also feature the inspiring real life story of Paul Robinson, who explains how he managed to uncover the mystery behind his undiagnosed symptoms.

Our work wouldn’t be possible without your support. But it’s not just your fundraising and donations that can help us. We have volunteers across the country that do an amazing job and work around the clock to help Allergy UK. You can see what they do and why they got involved from a piece on our special ‘thank you’ event on page 11.

Plus, see what we’ve been up to with our recent community work on page 10 and how you can get involved in our fundraising. We have lots of activities for you to take part in, from the light-hearted to high adrenaline. 2012 is a busy year with the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, the London Olympics and exciting initiatives involving the work of Allergy UK. So make 2012 the year to get fit, have fun and raise vital funds for us!

We’re looking forward to the year ahead and sharing our success with you.

Jim Bennett

Chief Executive
Paul Robinson suffered for four years with an undiagnosed medical condition. He explains how he beat his histamine problem.

In autumn 2006 I began to have indigestion and stomach pains. These quickly escalated and by the following spring I was in excruciating pain. I was prescribed exceptionally high levels of both painkillers and acid suppressants.

I had many investigations involving endoscopies, CT scans, blood tests, consultations with gastroenterologists and specialist surgeons and appointments with my endocrinologist (as I had an existing thyroid condition). They didn’t find anything conclusive and I spent the following three years in pain, unable to do anything useful.

I was permanently ill. I had constant stomach pain and no energy. My doctors had all drawn a complete blank and I was told to keep taking the tablets. They had no more tests they could think of.

By spring 2010 I knew I had no choice but to do my own research. I read everything I could find on the causes of acidity. Several of the obvious causes had already been ruled out. But one minor cause had not even been considered. I was also given a clue at this stage.

I began to develop severe depression. I discovered the histamine protein released during allergic responses, inflammation and some infections could cause the stomach to produce excess acid. I looked at medical research concerning histamine. I was startled to learn histamine finds it hard to cross the blood–brain barrier. However, small amounts of histamine can reach the brain if there is enough in the bloodstream.

Histamine works by locking onto receptors in cells. The brain has histamine receptors because histamine is also a neurotransmitter. In the brain, histamine’s role is to reduce both serotonin and noradrenaline levels. My depression was a big clue. Could histamine be causing my digestive problems and depression?

“My doctors had all drawn a complete blank... they had no more tests they could think of.”
I avidly read everything I could find out about how to lower histamine levels. I knew that antihistamines do not lower histamine levels; they just block the histamine reaching the receptors, leaving the histamine free to go elsewhere. I also knew antihistamines would not work in the brain because the brain has histamine receptors that antihistamines cannot block (H3 receptors). However, I discovered that one molecule of vitamin C destroys one molecule of histamine!

I now had a plan and went back to my doctor. I suggested I try high levels of antihistamines combined with high levels of vitamin C. My doctor said this was unlikely to work but I went ahead anyway. The pain eased off over the next two weeks and I was able to stop the pain relief and stomach acid suppressants. Amazingly, as I was on 3000mg of vitamin C per day, taken in six doses of 500mg spread over the day, my depression was gone within thirty six hours (and has not returned).

I recently saw an immunologist, at my own request, and he confirmed my diagnosis and treatment. He concluded due to my urticaria (hives) as a child it was likely I had internal urticaria within my digestive system. The urticaria could not be seen via any of the medical tests I previously had. The simplest diagnostic method was to try antihistamines.

I am still on the antihistamines and vitamin C. I haven’t had any symptoms since.

**What I’ve learnt:**

- Never give up
- Take responsibility for your own health, even when working with medical professionals
- Do your own research if you have to

If the NHS had a consultant specialising in diagnostic work, I believe complex conditions like mine might be diagnosed faster and cost effectively. In my case, an immunologist was necessary but it was four years before I realised this. As a result I had many unnecessary tests, wasting NHS resources.

So, my problems were caused by a little protein called histamine, generated by hidden urticaria. Histamine robbed me of nearly four years of my life. I hope this story will inspire others in a similar situation.

*Paul has written a book about his experience: ‘Recovering with T3: My Journey from Hypothyroidism to Good Health Using the T3 Thyroid Hormone.’*
DAOSiN® is the only dietary supplement in the world that treats food intolerances, based on intolerance to histamine. It is developed for people with low levels of the enzyme Diamine oxydase (DAO) however, it does not replace a balanced diet or healthy lifestyle. DAOSiN® contains DAO, which is responsible for breaking down histamine in the gut, and supplements the natural occurrence of this enzyme in the body.

By taking DAOSiN® capsules before mealtimes, the amount of DAO in the small intestine is increased, preparing the body to break down the histamine in offending foods. This re-establishes the natural balance of histamine levels in the body.

These reactions to histamine can be reduced by DAOSiN® where there is an intolerance to histamine.

To receive a free sample of DAOSIN®, please email your name and address to: info@daosin.co.uk

Sciotec (DAOSIN® manufacturers) continue to support Allergy UK as a Corporate Partner.

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**Reader offer - DAOSiN®**

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**Nightrider – fundraiser for Allergy UK**

9-10 June 2012

To book your place email: jim@allergyuk.org or call 01322 470331

See more fundraising events on page 13
Allergy UK welcomes anaphylaxis guidelines

In December 2011, NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) published guidelines on the initial assessment and referral following emergency treatment for anaphylactic episodes. Allergy UK welcomes the new guidelines and sees them as a very positive development.

Lindsey McManus, Deputy Chief Executive, Allergy UK, said: “Support in obtaining a diagnosis after a hospital admission for an anaphylactic reaction has been, up until now, very sketchy, with no clear pathway for the patient. This can cause a great deal of worry for the patient or their carer.

“Leaving the hospital without being given the appropriate medication or a referral to an allergy specialist, should another reaction happen, is very frightening. Although this is only a guideline, it is a welcome step forward.”

Recommendations from the new guidelines include:

• Record the circumstances leading up to the onset of the reaction to help to identify the possible trigger

• Children younger than 16 years who have had emergency treatment for suspected anaphylaxis should be admitted to hospital under the care of a paediatric medical team

• After emergency treatment for suspected anaphylaxis, offer people (or, as appropriate, their parent and/or carer) an appropriate adrenaline ii injector as an interim measure before the specialist allergy service appointment

• Each hospital trust providing emergency treatment for suspected anaphylaxis should have separate referral pathways for suspected anaphylaxis in adults (and young people) and children

ii. Adrenaline (also known as epinephrine) acts quickly to constrict blood vessels, relax muscles in the lungs to improve breathing, stimulate the heartbeat and helps to stop swelling around the face and lips.

For more information visit: www.nice.org.uk
Katherine Farrow from Essex is mum to three year old William. She shares her experience of having a child with severe food allergies and overcoming the misperceptions about food allergy and intolerance.

In my experience, people can be quite dismissive of food allergies and intolerances. They think they are signs of a fussy eater or a faddy diet and do not appreciate that it’s not a choice. The lack of awareness makes our lives quite frustrating at times. Looking after a small child is a hard enough job itself, but having an allergic child makes it twice as difficult. However it’s not impossible.

My son, William, was diagnosed with severe allergies to soya, milk, wheat, gluten and eggs when he was six months old. He is particularly allergic to eggs and has anaphylactic reactions to them when he eats them or when they’re in his surrounding environment.

“Looking after a small child is a hard enough job itself, but having an allergic child makes it twice as difficult.”

When people hear the long list of food he’s unable to have they always ask, “What does he eat?” His diet is not varied but is healthy – lots of homemade dishes with meat, fish, rice, fruit and vegetables. Once you know where to look there are also good ‘free from’ ranges in supermarkets and on the internet. With allergies on the increase this is, unfortunately, a growing market, so the choice becomes wider. As long as we control his environment and his diet, he remains well. However, it’s outside factors that make things hard.
We find eating out as a family extremely difficult. We’re unable to guarantee butter hasn’t been used for cooking or that there’s been no cross-contamination with eggs in the kitchen. A plain jacket potato and beans is my son’s staple meal in restaurants, but we avoid restaurants where possible. Our family holidays have to be self-catering and preferably in the UK so we can read the allergy information on food labels. He’s now at the age where we’re going to have to start thinking carefully about how we can keep him safe at school.

Children’s birthday parties and Christmas are particularly tricky, as party food is dropped on the floor where William can get it. As parents, it just means we have to be more vigilant. I feel mean telling children and adults not to share food with him at parties. I’ve had strange looks from adults who’ve offered William a biscuit or a piece of cake only to be told by me that he can’t have it. It’s hard for an adult to understand, let alone a three year old child.

As a parent of an allergic child you have to constantly keep your wits about you. Although the child has the allergy, it’s the parents who find it difficult to cope with. I know William has missed out on ‘normal’ activities such as birthday parties or birthday cake, but he doesn’t know any different. I do though, and at times it makes me very sad.

Until I had my son, I was one of the people unaware of the impact of allergies on daily life, and how the smallest things like going out as a family could turn into an ordeal (taking medication, epipens, pre-cooked food). However, after finding people in similar circumstances, and sharing experiences and knowledge, the fear factor does go and day-to-day life gets much easier.

Katherine’s advice to those at the start of their journey:

• Try not to let allergies take over your life
• Do the best you can to educate people about allergies
• Never put a lit happy birthday candle in a jelly!
We’ve been busy raising awareness of our work:

A big thank you

Allergy UK was delighted to receive a cheque for £174 from the Waitrose store in Biggin Hill, Kent. Shoppers voted for Allergy UK to receive the funds as part of the supermarket’s ‘Community Matters’ scheme.

Customer Jacquie Mather nominated Allergy UK as one of the featured charities as a thank you for the support her family received. “My granddaughters suffer from life-threatening anaphylaxis and asthma. I was keen to raise much-needed funds so Allergy UK can support other families.”

Spreading the word

Allergy UK’s Deputy Chief Executive, Lindsey McManus, recently joined a support group meeting run by Stevie West to raise awareness about our work and services. Lindsey spoke at the National Osteoporosis Society’s support group meeting in Bromley, South London.

She gave tips on how to pinpoint the cause of food intolerance and answered questions about chemical sensitivities from using cosmetics and perfumes. She told the group more needs to be done to raise awareness amongst GPs to recognise symptoms of allergies and food intolerances.

Congratulations Carol!

Congratulations to Focus reader Carol Foster, who won a Filtrate air purifier after entering our Indoor Allergy Week competition in the previous edition of Focus. Carol was delighted with her prize: “Thank you so much,” she said. “I never thought I’d win!”
Three cheers to our volunteers

On 14 December 2011, we held a special ‘thank you’ party for our volunteers to show our appreciation for their hard work over the last year. We are grateful for the time they donate to Allergy UK and this was our chance to give something back.

People from all walks of life have joined Allergy UK’s team of trusty volunteers to help people with allergies, intolerance and chemical sensitivities. We benefit from their wide range of skills and experience – from administration support to designing and proof reading our communication materials. Our volunteers also run our charity shop in Crayford, Kent, which brings in vital funds to support our work.

Meet an Allergy UK volunteer

Name: Viv Pearson

What inspired you to volunteer with Allergy UK?

I was previously volunteering at a nearby hospice and also at the Citizens Advice Bureau. When I came to Allergy UK, I found the people really friendly and committed. It made me want to join and be a part of the team.

What work do you get involved in?

I get involved in many different tasks by providing administration support to Allergy UK’s cause related marketing team. The team works in partnership with allergy related companies to raise awareness of their products. I’ve sourced conference centres for events and workshops across the country, which involved speaking to lots of different people. I’ve also helped out with large campaigns and built a contact database.

What would you recommend to someone thinking of volunteering?

Know what you want to do, show you’re good at it and pursue it. I have a specific role at Allergy UK with my own desk, which makes me feel like part of the team. Volunteers can sometimes be under used – show you can do more than standing at the photocopier and shredding paper.
Introducing Allergy UK’s North West group

We are eleven friends that got together from knowing 13 year old Molly. Molly died a year ago due to a terrible allergic reaction to nuts.

One member of our group, Maurice had the idea of producing a variety show to raise funds and awareness of Allergy UK. We also got together with a lady called Marilyn who has a grandchild with a nut allergy.

Our show will take place on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 March 2012 at the Met, Bury, Lancashire. It includes a spectacular cast of 30 people, of all ages, performing various numbers from hit musicals. We’ve already raised over £2000 and will be holding raffles on the night to raise even more.

Our group is committed to staying together to stage more fundraising events after the show to maintain its own, and Allergy UK’s profile. Molly’s family feels this is an important aspect of the group.

We are holding non uniform and awareness days at the schools Molly attended during Food Allergy and Intolerance Week (23-29 January 2012). We also have a Celebrity Football Challenge later this year.

Help support us

I enclose a cheque for £_________ as a donation to Allergy UK to support their work.

Gift Aid Declaration
As a Registered Charity we can claim tax back from any donation. If you are a taxpayer and would like your donation to be worth more please tick this box: ☐

I am a UK taxpayer. Yes/No

Signature: Date:

Name: Post Code:

Please send donations to Allergy UK, Planwell House, LEFA Business Park, Edginton Way, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 5BH
Fundraising events 2012

Get involved in a fundraising event this year:

**Springtime Walk and City of London quiz**
7 May 2012 (Bank holiday weekend)
Central London
Join Allergy UK’s second Springtime Walk. This time it’s across London, and we’ll be organising a quiz challenge. You can walk at your own pace, so all levels of fitness welcome.

**Nightrider**
9-10 June 2012
London
[www.nightrider.org.uk](http://www.nightrider.org.uk)
See the City of London in a different light by cycling 100km once the sun has gone down.

**British 10k**
8 July 2012
Central London
[www.thebritish10klondon.co.uk](http://www.thebritish10klondon.co.uk)
Join 25,000 runners and take to the streets on London on this iconic route. You’ll jog past Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and Nelson’s Column in the run up to the world famous Olympic Games.

**Run to the Beat**
21 October 2012
The O2, Greenwich, London
[www.runtothebeat.co.uk](http://www.runtothebeat.co.uk)
If running to the beat sounds like music to your ears, don’t miss out on this half marathon.

You can also enter in an event in your local area for Allergy UK. To find out about fundraising in an area near you or for an informal chat about any of our events please contact: jim@allergyuk.org or call 01322 470331.
Tesco has launched a new free food intolerance service, supported and developed in conjunction with Allergy UK. The service is available via The Nutri Centre store in Dudley and it is planned to be rolled out in 2012 to stores nationwide.

Completely free of charge, any customer can request a consultation with a fully qualified in-store nutritionist to discuss symptoms of food intolerance, such as bloating, headaches, or painful joints. Many of us may not realise we are struggling to digest things such as gluten and lactose, but experience real discomfort after eating.

As part of the service the customer is entitled to two private consultations to understand the nature of their symptoms and whether they are likely to be caused by a food intolerance. In the second consultation, the nutritionist will be able to advise which foods are most likely to have caused the symptoms, and give appropriate advice as to how to proceed. The customer is welcome to return to The Nutri Centre for further advice any time.

With over twenty years' experience, The Nutri Centre is Europe’s leading natural health company, specialising in complementary medicine, vitamins, minerals, herbal supplements, nutritional food, sports supplements, books and organic beauty products. The company has 13 stores nationwide. Visit their website:

www.nutricentre.com or free advice helpline on 020 7436 5122.
A day in the life of... a helpline advisor

Meet Paula (left) and Raegan from Allergy UK’s helpline.

**Describe a typical day.**

Our helpline and web chat go live from 9.00am. We never know the nature of the calls we are going to take. Once the early morning rush is over we send information packs, factsheets or translation cards. After a well-deserved lunch, we’re back on the phones, responding to emails, and providing comment on Allergy UK’s Forum.

**How can the helpline assist an allergy sufferer?**

Callers contact us with a wide variety of symptoms. People often assume they have an allergy when it could be an intolerance or chemical sensitivity. We listen carefully and ask questions to work out the cause and how we can help.

**What are your busiest times?**

August and September are a busy period for us with parents preparing to send their child to school and needing advice.

We have a lot of media interest before our awareness weeks: Food Allergy & Intolerance Week (23-29 January 2012), National Allergy Week (23-29 April 2012) and Indoor Allergy Week (12-18 November 2012). During the awareness week(s), it’s all hands on deck. The helpline is busy with calls from people who have heard about us through the media.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

Helping people develop a greater understanding of allergies. It’s rewarding when patients say how much they appreciate our help and they feel they can get a referral from their GP after speaking to us.

**What’s the toughest thing about your job?**

Occasionally we have callers who are at the end of their tether. We listen to them when they feel they’ve got no one else to turn to. We’re here to let people know they’re not alone.

**If you weren’t a helpline advisor what would you be?**

Paula: I would work in a hospital to visit the wards and speak to people who don’t have any visitors.

Raegan: I would set up a rescue centre for unwanted animals.
Checking labels on food packaging is becoming the norm in our consumer-savvy society. Basic nutritional information is accessible and easy to understand on most pre-packed food packaging in the UK. With consumer friendly initiatives, such as the traffic light labelling scheme, we’re alerted to high levels of fat and sugar before hitting the checkouts. On clearly-labelled products, all it takes is a quick scan of the packaging to count calories, measure salt intake and check nutritional information.

But for those with a food allergy or intolerance, where correct food labelling is of paramount importance, supermarket shopping can be a painstaking task. A weekly trip to the shops can be time-consuming and stressful, as allergy aware shoppers hunt down the aisles for ‘safe to eat’ foods for themselves or family members. Many supermarkets have a dedicated section of ‘free from’ foods, which can save time, although those with food allergies or intolerances find it’s a limited range, particularly if they have more than one allergy.

A recent study from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) found people with severe nut allergies used the allergy advice box as an indicator as to whether food is safe to eat and often ignored ‘may contain’ warnings. Interestingly, the research revealed if the food label didn’t contain an allergy advice box, a majority of people wrongly assumed the product was free from allergens. It shows many are unaware the allergy advice box is voluntary.

This Food Allergy and Intolerance Week, Allergy UK is urging people with food allergies to always check the list of ingredients and ‘may contain’ warnings to avoid cross-contamination.

Allergy UK’s Deputy Chief Executive, Lindsey McManus, says consumers can get confused because of the inconsistency of food labelling, even when ingredients are listed on pre-packed food. “The lack of a standardised approach to food allergy labelling can make it difficult for people to know what information to look out for. It can vary by brand and product.

“The food allergy box and ‘may contain’ labelling on pre-packaged food are a positive step towards making allergy information accessible. But people should be cautious when they purchase loose products, such as bakery goods, which may not contain allergy information.”
Allergy UK receives calls every day from people concerned about what to look out for when food shopping. We recommend the following steps:

- **Cook using fresh ingredients as much as possible**
- **Ask your local supermarket (or shop) for additional information on their ‘free from’ range**
- **Check labelling every time you purchase a pre-packaged product – a new ingredient may have been added since you last bought it**

The Food Standards Agency issued voluntary best practice guidance on managing food allergens using appropriate advisory labelling in 2009 for small businesses that make or sell pre-packed food. All pre-packed food sold in the EU has to show on the label if it contains any one of 14 allergens as an ingredient (or if one of its ingredients contains, or is made from, one of these).

Allergy UK offers a free food allergy alert service direct from the Food Standards Agency. If a pre-packaged food product is withdrawn or recalled due to incorrect or missing allergen information on the label we’ll let you know. You can sign up to the service and receive allergy alert emails for particular allergens by visiting our website: [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org) or calling our helpline on **01322 619898**.

### Foods You Can

Foodsyoucan.co.uk is an information website for people with food allergies and intolerances. Using a bespoke search tool, it does the hard work for you by finding the foods suitable for your dietary needs and letting you know where to purchase them. It’s a free and impartial service to make your life easier.

It has great features like a ‘recipes & cooking’ section with recipes submitted by its users. There’s also an interactive ‘out and about’ area with information on places to eat, travel, holidays, days out and much more. You can take part by sharing your thoughts and ideas or uploading and rating content. Get involved by visiting [www.foodsyoucan.co.uk](http://www.foodsyoucan.co.uk) today or if you’re on the go, download the mobile phone app.
Pot Roast Chicken with Sweet Baby Onions
by Phil Vickery

Pot roasting is part roasting and part braising - the meat is slowly cooked in a covered dish. I like to roast chicken with a little wine and plenty of big flavours such as lemon and thyme. The braised vinegar onions make a deliciously different accompaniment to the tender chicken.

serves: 4-6
preparation: 20mins
cooking: 1 hour 20mins

1 x 1.25kg fresh chicken
1 large lemon, halved
600g baby onions or shallots, peeled but with the root left on
1 small bunch fresh thyme
125ml dry white wine
1 x 10g gluten-free chicken stock cube
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 teaspoons caster sugar
100g unsalted butter, cubed
2 tablespoons cornflour
4 tablespoons water
salt and freshly ground black pepper
mashed potato, to serve

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.

Put the lemon halves inside the chicken. Place the chicken in a large flameproof casserole dish.

Place the onions around the bird, along with the thyme, wine, crumbled stock cube, vinegar, sugar, butter and seasoning.

Place the dish over a low heat and bring to a simmer. Once the liquid starts to bubble place the lid on top and pop into the oven for 1 hour.

Once cooked, remove the chicken and thyme stalks from the pan.

Gently cook down the onions and stock for 10 minutes on the hob or until it forms a gravy-like consistency.

Mix the cornflour and water together in a cup to form a smooth paste. Stir the paste into the simmering mixture, stirring all the time and the juices will thicken nicely.

Serve the chicken whole or jointed on a large plate with the onion stew alongside. I love mash with this dish.

Recipe from Phil Vickery’s ‘Seriously Good! Gluten-free Cooking’ published by Kyle Books at £19.99
the allergy + free from show
18-20 May 2012, Olympia, London

Take control of your allergies

New name, more unrivalled allergy content:

* Thousands of new products
* Consultant Allergists, Dieticians, Dermatologists & Respiratory Specialists
* ‘Free-from’ cooking classes
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* Treatment and product demonstrations
* Parent workshops
* Health professional masterclasses

www.allergyshow.co.uk

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Q. I just found out from a professional allergy test that I have a severe allergy to nickel. Do amalgam fillings contain mercury/nickel?

A. Amalgam fillings have mercury in them. But they shouldn’t have nickel as amalgams are alloys of silver, tin, copper and mercury. It’s best to check with your own dentist as different brands vary. Composites (white fillings) are nickel and mercury-free, as are a composite of plastics.

Gold used for crowns should be nickel-free but it may not be. You should check with your dentist who can check with the dental laboratory they use. Some cheaper ‘gold’ crowns have been known to have nickel in them but nickel-free varieties are available.

Q. I have urticaria which I keep under control with antihistamines. I’ve discovered I’m pregnant and understand I can’t take these during my pregnancy. What can I do to reduce my symptoms?

A. The newer, non-sedating antihistamines have an excellent safety record and do not cross the blood–brain barrier. However, due to ethical difficulties of testing any drug on pregnant women, all manufacturers continue to advise against taking antihistamines. Ask your GP if they can find a suitable antihistamine for you, after taking into account your medical history. Fresh orange and nettle tea acts as a natural antihistamine, if you are unable to take this kind of medicine.

Q. I am a new mum and my baby is milk allergic. I’m still breastfeeding and ate a food that contained lactic acid. The label on the food did not state 'contains milk' and I wondered if lactic acid is related to or comes from lactose?

A. Lactic acid can be made by fermenting lactose, but it is far more common for it to be made by bacteria or other processes. It is found naturally in the body, where it is made in our cells. It isn’t actually found in milk; it’s just that it is used to curdle milk to make cheese (this is why it became known as ‘milk acid’).
Q. My son recently had a serious allergic reaction from a takeaway meal. We purchased this from a local restaurant that we have used for years, as they've always made his meal nut-free.

He was rushed to hospital and thankfully all was well, but it could have had a far worse outcome. We have known about his condition since he was four years old. He is now thirteen.

The restaurant insists they did not add peanut, especially as it’s not an ingredient in the meal. But we had the food tested by our local Environmental Health department where we live. They found more than 300mg of peanut in the sample. The restaurant says it must have come from an ingredient from their supplier, which may have contained a trace of peanut. We are very familiar with 'may contain nut traces' labelling (which is overused in many cases), but how much constitutes a trace? 300mg per kg seems more than a trace to me. Is there a definitive measurement of a trace?

A. There is no definition of a ‘trace’, although given that 300mg is the equivalent of a couple of whole peanuts, it certainly seems to be more than a ‘trace’. I’m not clear from your question whether 300mg was the amount found, or whether peanut was found at a concentration of 300mg/kg (in which case if the meal weighed, say, 250g then the amount of peanut present in the portion would be 75mg). In any case, the peanut might not have been equally distributed through the meal and a large concentration could have been present in one part of it. Alternatively it could just be that the meal was cooked in a pan which had previously contained peanut oil, and that was not washed out.

300mg is certainly well above the amount needed to trigger most peanut allergic patients. However, takeaway meal ingredients do not have to be listed on the packaging according the Food Standards Agency (unlike pre-packed foods). We can only hope the supplier is genuinely doing the best they can to cater for those with allergies. It may be that you have little redress about this.
Newly Endorsed Products

Seal of Approval

Welcron Co., Ltd

SESA Anti Allergy Bedding
Model Range: Pillow Cover, Duvet Cover, Mattress Cover,
Bedding Cover

Company Statement:

WELCRON's anti Allergy range for the most effective
protection against house dust mites caused by its high density
fabric structure using microfiber fabric has an excellent softn and comfortable.

Indesit Company UK Ltd

Indesit Standard Condenser Tumbler Dryer

Please see website for model numbers

Company Statement:

ANTI ALLERGY ACTION. New Hotpoint/Hotpoint-
Ariston Tumble Dryers take care of your laundry guaranteeing
you perfect hygiene and outstanding drying results. The
special Anti Allergy Cycle provides a deep sterilization of your
garments reducing the presence of house dust mite, fungi and
bacteria. It is an ideal solution to help reducing problems due
to allergens.
**Indesit Company UK Ltd**

Indesit Heat Pump Condenser Tumble Dryer A Class

**Company Statement:**

ANTI ALLERGY ACTION. New Hotpoint/Hotpoint-Ariston Tumble Dryers take care of your laundry guaranteeing you perfect hygiene and outstanding drying results. The special Anti Allergy Cycle is an ideal solution to help reducing problems due to allergens providing a deep sterilization of the garments.

**Hitachi Appliances Inc**

Hitachi Washing Machine
Model No's: BDW80MV, BDW70NSE, BDW80PSE, BDW70MAE, BD-W80NAE, BD-W70NV

**Dyson Ltd**

Dyson Upright Bagless Vacuum Cleaner

Model: DC41 Animal - UK, USA & ANZ, DC41i - UK & DC43 Animal – Canada

Dyson Cylinder Bagless Vacuum Cleaner

Please see website for model numbers: [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

**Princess Worldwide Ltd**

Princess Vertical Steamer

Model No's 332832, 332833, 333832, 321203, 321206 & 322006
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