

Medical Diet frequently asked questions

What is a medical diet?

A medical diet is a medically prescribed therapeutic diet as a treatment for a medical condition. Our medical diet procedure also includes special diets required for pupils with food allergies or food intolerances.

What is not a medical diet?

Medical diets do not include diets required for religious, cultural or personal requirements/preferences and dietary trials or elimination diets. These diets can all be met through our standard menus.

How do I get a medical diet for my child?

Speak to your child's school to get a medical diet form. Complete this in full and return it to school with a copy of your child's medical evidence.

Why do I need to provide medical evidence?

Medical confirmation is required so that our team have all necessary information to safely prepare a medical diet menu for your child.

What is classed as medical evidence?

Medical evidence is a letter from your child's pediatric consultant or dietitian, GP or specialist nurse that outlines their medical condition and/or their need for a medical diet.

What is not classed as medical evidence?

Any letter that has not come from a recognised medical professional with the scope to diagnose and advise on medical diets, for example, including but not limited to a nutritionist, nutritional therapist, chiropractor, Food intolerance 'testing' that is not completed by a pediatric consultant, for example IgG testing, is also not accepted as evidence of an allergy or intolerance.

How long does the medical diet process take?

For new children starting in September requiring a medical diet, the Medical Diet form and medical evidence needs to have been provided to the school and forwarded to the Enquire Kitchen Team before the end of the summer term to be processed and in place for September start. Any requests received after that date will be processed as soon as possible and we aim for this to be within two weeks where possible.

How often will my child's medical diet change?

If your child has a medical diet menu in place, our team will provide a new medical diet menu for your child at each menu change. The menu changes twice a year. Autumn / Winter and Spring / Summer.

My Child has a nut allergy. Why do I have to request a medical diet if my child's school is nut free?

Whilst we do not knowingly include nuts in our recipes or use ingredients containing nuts within the education sector, there may be occasions where an ingredient with a 'may contain traces of nut/peanut' may be used. For children with allergens to tree nut or peanut these items are removed from their medical diet menu. We are unable to take responsibility for any foods brought in by children in packed lunches that may contain nuts.

My child doesn't have an allergy but another medical diet need, can you cater for this?

We do currently cater for conditions such as Type 1 Diabetes. These medical diet menus are often created alongside the support of your child's specialist dietitian. If your child has a condition other than an allergy that requires medical diet, please follow the medical diet process and a member of the team will contact you if necessary.

Why are there exclusions to the provision of medical diets?

Due to the nature of school kitchens and the widespread nature of certain allergens, our experience in providing medical diets for children with certain allergens has proved too high a risk. Where an allergen is found widely across the menu and risk of cross contamination is high The Enquire Learning Trust are unable to confidently and safely provide medical diets.

My child has allergies/intolerances to multiple allergens, why can't you cater for them?

We take allergens very seriously. In order to best manage the increased risk around providing medical diets for those children with complex multiple allergies, medical diet provision has been restricted. Allergens above combinations of 3 can become complex to manage and often result in restricted options. Our kitchens routinely cook with foods containing allergens and whilst our school cooks are trained in the management of allergies, the complexity in managing multiple allergies is beyond reasonable expectations of our school cooks and deemed too high risk.

I don't have medical evidence of my child's allergy, what do I do?

We are unable to provide a medical diet without the required medical evidence. If you suspect your child has an allergy/ intolerance, please approach your GP.

Partial reintroduction - my child can eat some things that contain their allergen but not others. Why do your medical diets remove all items?/ My child is partially reintroducing allergens back into their diet – do you cater for this?

Due to varying degrees of tolerance when reintroducing allergens and the reintroduction process requiring parental monitoring in order not to cause unnecessary harm, we do not participate in partial reintroductions of any kind.

My child has an appointment to see the consultant, but my GP has told me to remove an allergen from my child's diet in the meantime. Can The Enquire Learning Trust provide my child with a medical diet menu whilst we wait to see the consultant?

Yes, on receipt from a letter from your GP explaining this along with a completed medical diet form, the team can put in place a provisional medical diet. The team will require a copy of your child's consultant letter confirming diagnosis following your appointment to ensure provision of the correct medical diet menu for your child.

My child's meal is very different from what the other children are eating, why is this?

Although our team ensure medical diet meals reflect the wider menu wherever possible, it may be that your child's allergens are such that they require an alternative meal to be made on a specific day.

Why does my child have specialist products on their menu that are not related to their allergen (i.e. gluten free products but they are not allergic to gluten)?

If there is an alternative option to a dish on your child's menu it is because the standard option is not suitable. To provide your child with an alternative that reflects the school menu it maybe we have used a specialist product to do this. It also enables us to provide consistency and inclusivity across medical diet menus so that, where possible, children with medical diet menus are provided with the same dish, particularly in relation to deserts.

My child no longer needs a medical diet, what do I do now?

Please provide written communication to your child's school specifying that your child is no longer allergic/intolerant to their allergen(s) and that it can now be reintroduced in full into your child's diet. Following receipt of this communication the team will terminate your child's medical diet.

Why are some dishes repeated across my child's medical diet menu?

Although our team aim to provide as much variety as possible, where a child has multiple allergies, it may be that their options are restricted and repeated across a week to ensure that a suitable meal can be provided.

What food will my child eat whilst waiting for their paperwork to be processed?

A suitable jacket potato option will be available whilst awaiting your medical diet.

My child has autism and will only eat certain foods, does my child need a medical diet menu?

No, your child will not require a medical diet menu as this can be successfully managed locally. If you feel your school requires support with understanding your child's condition, please ask the school to contact the catering operations manager who will be able to request support from subject matter experts.