

## Allergies

**Asked by: Foy, Mary Kelly**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) prevent, (b) improve treatment for and (c) promote awareness of allergies.

**Answering member: Helen Whately | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

The majority of services for people living with allergies are commissioned locally through integrated care boards. However, to support and improve treatment for patients with more complex allergic conditions, NHS England commissions some specialised services, including specialist allergy clinics. There is an established Clinical Reference Group responsible for providing national clinical leadership for specialised immunology and allergy services.

To help promote awareness of allergies, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on a range of allergy conditions. NICE promotes its guidance via its website, newsletters and other media.

The Food Standards Agency also works to raise awareness of food hypersensitivity, and has carried out several campaigns aimed at supporting both people with food hypersensitivities and food businesses.

**HC Deb 26 April 2023 | PQ 181322**

## NHS: Public Appointments

**Asked by: Foy, Mary Kelly**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of appointing a national allergy lead.

**Answering member: Helen Whately | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

The Government has no plans to appoint a national allergy lead.

**25 April 2023 | PQ 181321**

### Catering: Allergies

**Asked by: West, Catherine**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing allergen labelling for menus in restaurants and cafes in England.

**Answering member: Neil O'Brien | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

All food businesses are under a legal obligation to provide information on the presence of the 14 major allergens in food, including in the non-prepacked sector, such as in restaurants and cafes, so that allergic consumers are able to make safe food choices. Current requirements state that for non-prepacked food items, allergen information must be clearly signposted and can be provided in writing or orally.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA), which has policy responsibility for food safety, is currently considering how to improve the provision of information for people with allergies, and is researching different approaches for the provision of written and oral information in the non-prepacked food sector. Any changes must be carefully considered to assess the impacts for both consumer safety and food businesses.

The FSA has been working on food hypersensitivity for many years and its current work programme is focused on policy, research and evidence, supporting enforcement and engaging with consumers and businesses.

**HC Deb 21 April 2023 | PQ 180978**

### Allergies: Waiting Lists

**Asked by: Hodgson, Mrs Sharon**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of referral waiting times for allergy tests.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for patients who require allergy tests.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce the NHS backlog and (b) ensure that patients who need to be tested for allergies have timely access to allergy clinics.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce referral waiting times for patients with allergies who need to be tested by an allergy specialist.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve waiting times for patients who require to be tested for allergies.

**Answering member: Will Quince | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

Specialist allergy services are commissioned by NHS England Specialised Commissioning in line with the published service specification. While no specific assessment has been made of the adequacy of waiting times, the service specification sets out standard referral processes and equity of access to services, as well as highlighting the response time and prioritisation targets. There are regular review meetings between regional commissioning teams and providers to ensure compliance with service standards.

To reduce waiting times more generally for elective services, the 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years.

We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity. This funding aims to deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million additional checks and procedures and 30% further elective activity by 2024/25 than pre-pandemic levels. A proportion of this funding will be invested in workforce capacity and training and we have committed to invest £5.9 billion for new beds, equipment and technology.

**HC Deb 14 February 2023 | PQ 140054; PQ 140056; PQ 140057; PQ 140058; PQ 140059**

[Allergies: Health Services](#)

**Asked by: Hodgson, Mrs Sharon**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that allergy clinics have the (a) resources and (b) capacity to carry out allergy tests on patients with suspected allergies within an appropriate timeframe.

**Answering member: Helen Whately | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

Specialist allergy services for patients with rare and complex conditions, including allergy clinics, are commissioned by NHS England Specialised Commissioning in line with the published Service Specification. This sets out that providers should deliver a diagnostic package for the investigation of suspected allergic diseases, including initial consultation and follow-up in a dedicated allergy clinic and specialised allergy tests.

**HC Deb 13 February 2023 | PQ 140055**

Allergies: Health Services

**Asked by: Davies, Geraint**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to publish guidance on fragrance free (a) health centres and (b) hospitals to help support people with (i) allergies and (ii) breathing difficulties.

**Answering member: Will Quince | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

The Department has no current plans to publish guidance on fragrance free health centres and hospitals.

**HC Deb 20 December 2022 | PQ 108069**

Restaurants: Allergies

**Asked by: Murray, Mrs Sheryll**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that standards on (a) food labelling and allergens and (b) staff training on allergens in restaurants are (i) maintained and (ii) enhanced.

**Answering member: Neil O'Brien | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

Information provided to the consumer must not mislead and must enable the safe use of food. The United Kingdom maintains high standards on the information provided on food labelling to ensure consumer confidence. The Government food strategy sets out further action on consumer information and transparency.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) aims to reduce harm to people with food hypersensitivity and ensure that related food safety standards are maintained. This includes improving the provision of information for people with allergies and working with food businesses to increase allergen training in the sector. The FSA's programme on food hypersensitivity is focused on policy, research and evidence to support enforcement and engaging with consumers and businesses.

**HC Deb 06 December 2022 | PQ 97515**

## Restaurants: Labelling

**Asked by: Thomas, Gareth**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring restaurants to provide a full list of ingredients contained in their dishes; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Government is committed to optimising the information that is available to consumers, and the Government Food Strategy sets out work that we will be taking forward on consumer information and transparency. In the UK we maintain high standards on the food information that is provided to consumers, but for practical reasons there are fewer mandatory labelling rules when food is sold loose, such as in a restaurant.

All food businesses are under a legal obligation to provide information on the presence of the 14 major allergens in food, including in the out of home environment, so that allergic consumers are able to make safe food choices. The FSA, who has policy responsibility for food safety, is currently considering how to improve the provision of information for people with allergies, and researching different approaches for the provision of written and oral information in the non-prepacked food sector.

**HC Deb 29 November 2022 | PQ 92071**