

# Allergen, Lifestyle & Medical Menu Development in Schools

A complete guide to catering for alternative diets



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# Our Approach to Alternative Menus

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The Food & Nutrition Team at AVE provide the company with robust support for children with specific dietary needs. It is important to us that all children have the same positive experience and access to high quality food. If a student can not safely eat from the main menu at school, they will be provided with an alternative menu. This could be explained by a severe allergic reaction (anaphylactic), food intolerance and sensitivities, medical needs or ethical and cultural influences such as vegetarian, vegan, halal or kosher. We categorise our alternative menus into the three listed below. See the relevant chapters to understand the process involved in each.



## **Core Allergy**

Follow this process if a child has 1 or more of the 14 required to be declared as allergens by food law

## **Lifestyle**

Follow this process if a child excludes certain food due to ethical or religious beliefs



## **Medical**

Follow this process if none of the above are suitable



# The Benefits of Alternative Menus?

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We appreciate catering for students with different dietary needs can be daunting. However, by following the correct procedures and menu provided you can experience the benefits.

## ✓ **Safe and compliant**

We work with our QHSE department to ensure menus are in line with legal allergy requirements

## ✓ **Inclusive all needs and preferences**

Aligned with equality and human rights law to provide food for those following vegetarian, vegan, religious or cultural diet

## ✓ **Access to innovation**

We work with supplier to source new products in the market that are suitable for gluten free and vegan



*Did you know? 90% of food allergies in children are caused by milk, eggs, peanuts, nuts, soy or gluten. Therefore, menus and recipes must be able to adapt to ensure children with dietary needs can be catered for.*





# Company Allergen Policy

We are committed to reducing the risk to our customers with regards to the provision of food and the consumption of allergens which could lead to an allergic reaction and as such accept our duty to comply with the Food Information Regulation 2014, which states that allergen information must be available for all food sold.

Our [allergen policy](#) and [allergen matrices](#), lead by our QHSE team, are available for all company staff to download.

All allergies will be managed on site using the allergy matrix which is completed daily by catering staff. Any questions regarding allergen controls should be directed to our QHSE team.







# Menu Development Process




# Core Allergy Menus

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Our kitchens have immediate access to five innovative allergy menus listed on the next page. These are launched twice a year and are based on the primary core menu. This makes it manageable for catering staff and ensures students don't feel isolated.

The Food & Nutrition Team at AVE do not need to be notified of this as these menus are accessible on the shared drive. Parents must notify the school of any allergy requirements using the *"Alternative Menu Form"*(*Allergy & Lifestyle Notification and Medical Diet Request*). This form identifies if the student is categorised as 'RED' or 'AMBER' based on severity of allergy for post implementation controls and 'remember me' tools. Parents may need a menu consultation with the catering team to ensure an appropriate menu is available.

Allergy Menu - Autumn Winter 2022 NGCI						Week One
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
Option 1	Beef Bolognese With Penne Pasta, Garlic Bread & Green Salad 583686	Cowboy Pie Mash topped Sausage & Bean Pie with Carrots 583703	Roast Chicken Roasties & Fresh Vegetables Gravy 468695	Mild Chili Beef & Cheese Homemade Nachos Oven Baked Potato Wedges & Sweetcorn 583775	Golden Fish Fingers (MSC) Chips & Baked Beans 468711	
Option 2	Veggie Bolognese With Wholegrain Penne Pasta, Garlic Bread & Green Salad 522412	Veggie Cowboy Pie Mash topped Bean Pie with Carrots 522415	Cheese, Veg & Spinach Puff Pastry Roll Crispy Roasties & Fresh Veggie & Gravy 583735	Cheese & Veggie Homemade Nachos Oven Baked Potato Wedges & Sweetcorn 583806	Cheesy Bean Wrap Chips, Baked Beans 522385	
Jacket Potatoes	Crispy Skin Jacket Potatoes					
The Finale	Toffee Apple Slices topped with Vanilla Ice Cream 579036	Crispy Chocolate Cornflake Cakes 583726	Golden Syrup Sponge 583748	Pineapple Upside Down Cake 583846	Ginger Cookie 468725	
Please ensure dishes in this menu are created using the relevant recipe book for this special diet.						
						Ready to serve 



# Core Allergy Menus

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You can access the most recent menus and recipe books here:

- o [No gluten containing ingredients \(NGCI\)](#)
- o [NGCI & milk free](#)
- o [Milk free](#)
- o [Egg free](#)
- o [Allergen free](#)









# Lifestyle Menus

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Our kitchens have immediate access to two lifestyle menus. These are launched twice a year and are based on the primary core menu. This makes it manageable for catering staff and students don't feel isolated. Adaptations to the core menu will be available for those requiring a Halal or Vegan (see example) menu.

The Food & Nutrition Team at AVE do not need to be notified of this as these menus are accessible on the shared drive. Parents must notify the school of any lifestyle requirements using the "Alternative Menu Form"(Allergy & Lifestyle Notification and Medical Diet Request). This form will identify the student as categorised as 'BLUE' for post implementation controls and 'remember me' tools. Parents may need a menu consultation with the catering team to ensure an appropriate menu is available.

		Lifestyle Menu - Autumn Winter 2022 Vegan				Week One
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
Option 1	Veggie Bolognese With Wholegrain Penne Pasta, Garlic Bread & Green Salad 457361	Veggie Cowboy Pie Mash topped Veggie Sausage & Bean Pie With Carrots 522415	Vegan Sausage Roll Crispy Focaccia & Fresh Veggies & Gravy 584741	Cheese & Veggie Homemade Naches Oven Baked Potato Wedges & Sweetcorn 584751	Crispy Bean & Vegetable Fingers Chips 506112	
Jacket Potatoes	Crispy Skin Jacket Potatoes					
The Finale	Jelly & Fruit 525720	Crispy Chocolate Cornflake Cakes 579238	Rocket Lolly 522709	Fresh Fruit Salad 457512	Apple Flapjack 584728	
Please ensure dishes in this menu are created using the relevant recipe book for this special diet.						
						Ready to serve 



# Bespoke Medical Menus

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If the child can not use any of the core allergy or lifestyle options, a tailor-made medical menu can be created. This includes allergies outside of the 14 core allergens or a requirement for a modified texture meal if the child is dysphagic. Please adhere to the following process:

1 – Parents must complete the “Alternative Menu Form”(Allergy & Lifestyle Notification and Medical Diet Request), providing medical evidence, and send to school catering department.

2 – The Operator will forward the request onto The Food & Nutrition Team who have 10 working days to create the bespoke menu. Please provide as much detail as possible to reduce questions during menu development

3 – The Operator will receive a link to a secure folder that contains a 3-week menu cycle (where possible) and a recipe book with full allergen and nutritional breakdown.

4 - Following parent / guardian approval, the catering manager will implement the agreed menu.



# Popular Questions Answered





## *Can you cater for children with swallowing difficulties?*

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We take the provision of modified texture food for texture modified diets extremely seriously. Dysphagia can lead to malnutrition and dehydration and therefore variety is important to keep the menu interesting and appealing.

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation (IDDSI) is the framework medical professionals use to determine the texture that is safe for individuals with swallowing difficulties, using the levels shown on the image below. These levels are determined by strict scientific testing methods.


Modified texture is categorized as a medical menu development. Therefore, parents must complete the Medical Diet Request Form that provides the Food & Nutrition Team with the required IDDSI level, along with any allergen or lifestyle considerations. Menus will be designed based on our 3-week core menu or can be integrated into any of our existing core allergy menus (NGCI, milk free, NGCI & milk free, allergen free or vegan). The menu will be colour coded, in line with the requested IDDSI level with appropriate testing methods on the back. See example on the next page.

As we can not guarantee the same level of scientific testing in our kitchens, and our teams are not qualified to texture modify food we ask that all children with dysphagia be supervised during serving times by a qualified member of school staff who has processed their meal appropriately.



# Bespoke IDDSI Menus

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**Medical Diet Menu PUREED**  
**Autumn/Winter 2022**  
**Week 1**

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	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Main					
The Finale					

Please ensure dishes in this menu are created using the relevant recipe book for this medical diet. **Must to accompanied by a qualified member of school staff**




Complete the **Drip Fork Test** and **Spoon Tilt Test** before serving. More information on the next page.

**Foods to avoid**

- Mixed thick & thin textures
- Hard or dry
- Tough or fibrous food
- Crispy or crunchy
- Crumbly bits
- Pips / seeds
- Food with skin or bones
- Long shaped food
- Sticky food
- Floppy foods
- Visible lumps

See examples on next page.



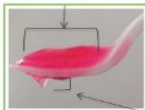
**Medical Diet Menu PUREED**

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Must be accompanied by a qualified member of school staff

**Fork Drip Test**

Sample sits in a pile above the fork; a small amount may flow through and form a short tail below the fork prongs, but it does not flow or drip continuously through the prongs of a fork.





**Foods to avoid**

- Mixed thick & thin textures (e.g soup with pieces of food)
- Hard or dry (e.g dry cakes, bread, cereal)
- Tough or fibrous foods (e.g pineapple, steak)
- Crispy (e.g crispy bacon)
- Crunchy (e.g raw carrot, apple or popcorn)
- Crumbly bits (e.g dry cake crumble)
- Pips / seeds
- Food with skin (e.g peas, grapes, chicken, salmon, sausage)
- Bones / gristle
- Long shaped food (e.g sausage, grapes)
- Sticky food (e.g gelatine, konjac containing jelly)
- Floppy foods (e.g uncooked spinach, cucumber, lettuce)
- Crusted formed during cooking (e.g mashed potato)
- Visible lumps (e.g in pureed food or yoghurt)

**Spoon Tilt Test**

Cohesive enough to hold its shape on the spoon. A full spoonful must plop off the spoon if the spoon is tilted or turned sideways. A very gentle flick may be necessary to dislodge the sample from the spoon. A thin film may remain on the spoon however, you should still be able to see the spoon through the thin film; i.e. the sample should not be firm and sticky. The sample may spread out slightly or slump very slowly on a flat plate.

Menu examples



## *Do you provide ketogenic / low carbohydrate menus?*

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Starchy carbohydrates provide an important source of energy and fibre, for growth, development and digestive health. Generally, to achieve a healthy and balanced diet, children and young people should consume 50% of total energy from carbohydrates. This is reflected in School Food Standards.

A ketogenic diet can be described as a diet low in carbohydrates, typically higher in protein and fat. Doctors or Dietitians may prescribe a low carbohydrate diet to individuals under unique circumstances. For example, it can be used as a medical therapy for drug-resistant epilepsy in children, possibly reducing seizure frequency and intensity. Some evidence suggests a low carbohydrate diet may be effective for glucose management amongst adults with type 2 diabetes. However, evidence in children reports adverse effects such as poor growth, a greater risk of cardiovascular disease and psychological problems. Therefore, a low carb diet for children with diabetes isn't recommended. In addition, there is no clear scientific consensus on what defines a low-carb/keto diet.

Consequently, we have made the decision to not create a ketogenic core menu. Core menus are analysed against children recommended nutrient intakes, so we are confident our recipes support a balanced diet. If a child requires a bespoke menu due to a medical dietary need, and has evidence from a medical professional, these should be requested via the Operations Manager who will contact our Nutrition team.





## *How accurate are carb counts?*

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Nutritional analysis is complex. To identify the actual nutritional value of a food requires laboratory analysis, conducted by many food manufacturers. There are three aspects to the accuracy of carb counts in our recipes.

**Database** - All food composition data (e.g the carbohydrate content of our products) are held in our recipe management database. The buying team ensures this information is kept up to date during product switches. This is crucial because foods are constantly being reformulated in response to consumer demand and Government guidelines to make food healthier. Many apps and tools available to the public will use averages when displaying nutritional information, this is why experts say product specific data is key to ensuring accuracy.

**Recipe Development** - This database of products is used to develop standardised recipes in our nutritional analysis software, accounting for weight changes when cooking etc. This software produces nutrition labels and reports for dishes, menus etc. These are managed by the Food & Nutrition team who are experienced and trained in recipe analysis accuracy.

**Communication** - We have resources available for our staff to ensure they know how and where to access nutrition information of dishes and recipes.



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*Why are your NGCI menus not called  
gluten free?*

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We have a 'No Gluten Containing Ingredients' menu, that remains similar to the main menu (where possible). We have not called this 'Gluten Free' as we do not cook this menu in a separate kitchen, and therefore can't guarantee against cross contamination from wheat, dust or food particles, despite all control measures being adhered to.

The catering team will follow the formal allergen safety process including a photo record sheet for reference. At lunch time, children with notified allergies will receive a pre-plated, labelled meal wrapped in cling film.



## *How do I order an alternative menu on SELECT?*

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For schools using SELECT, where an alternative menu has been agreed and provided for a pupil, even if that is an interim allergy free menu, the check box must be ticked at the bottom of the child information page and the child's profile updated. This will prevent parents from being able to order menu choices that are unsuitable for their child and can be completed by system "Kitchen Users" including the catering manager or school office administrator.

The parent will then only see the following option available at point of purchase and the kitchen report will reflect the need for a medical meal. If you turn the feature on while there are orders already placed in the system they are unaffected, so you may wish to cancel these to prevent confusion.

The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Meal Select". Below the title, it says "Please select the meal you would like to order for this day:". There is a dropdown menu with "Agreed Special Diet Menu" selected and highlighted in blue. Below the dropdown, there are two buttons: a green "Purchase" button and a grey "Cancel" button.





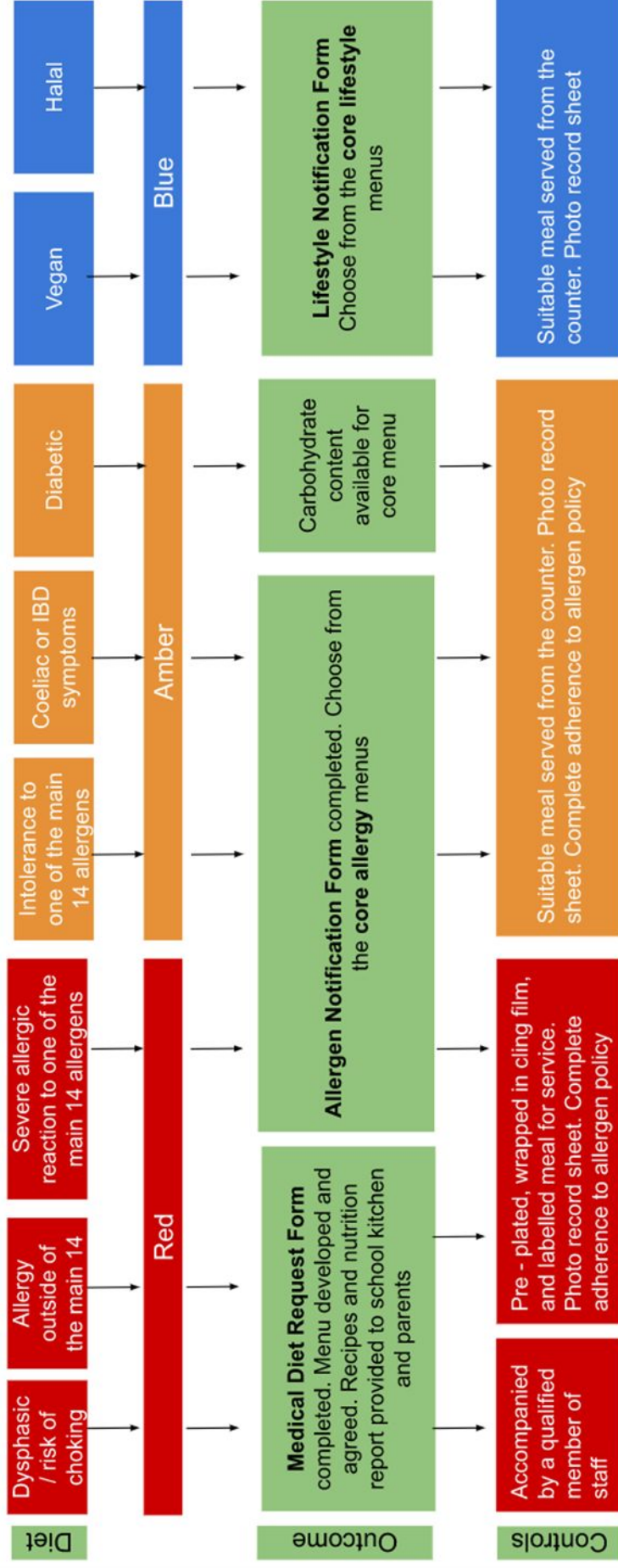
# Staff Resources



# Alternative Menu Process



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# Training

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Delivered by our QHSE department:

- All employees receive Food Safety, HACCP and Allergen Induction training on joining the company.
- Allergen policy and procedure training completed by all food production and food service staff within week 1 of joining the company.
- Online Allergen Training completed in the first 3 weeks of employment with the company
- Bite size refresher training modules delivered regularly

Delivered by our Food & Nutrition department:

- Texture modified training
- Apprenticeship modules in allergies and alternative menu development

