



Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme

Diets for high and complex needs: Information for schools and kura

Nutrition is fundamental to wellbeing and better educational outcomes.

All students at schools and kura taking part in Ka Ora, Ka Ako should get a nutritious lunch daily. This ensures that every student who needs a lunch can get one and minimises any stigma associated with receiving free meals in school.

Some students require a special meal. This may be for medical reasons such as an allergy or food intolerance, or because some foods must be avoided or prepared in a particular way for ethical or religious reasons. It is important that these students' needs are met so they can be included alongside their peers in Ka Ora, Ka Ako.

Special dietary needs

Ka Ora, Ka Ako requires suppliers and schools making their own lunches to prepare lunches that meet common special dietary needs as part their standard lunch service. Common dietary needs that should be catered for are:

- » common food allergies, except where one student has a combination of three or more food allergies
- » common food intolerances, specifically non-celiac gluten sensitivity and lactose intolerance
- » all religious dietary requirements
- » ethical dietary requirements – vegetarian and vegan diets may also be followed for religious reasons
- » pregnancy and breastfeeding

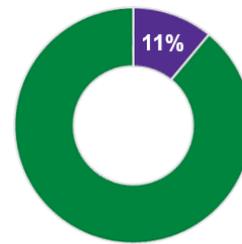
Providing a lunch should not put students at risk. Suppliers and schools making their own lunches should work within their expertise and capacity.

High and complex needs

A small number of students have multiple or high and complex dietary requirements that fall outside the range of typical needs catered for as part of the standard lunch service. These high and complex special dietary needs include:

- » rare or multiple allergies, generally three or more – these will be considered on a case by case basis and may need to be excluded from standard provision
- » intolerances other than common intolerances listed above, such as fructose intolerance, FODMAP (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols) intolerance, and other medically diagnosed intolerances
- » other medically prescribed diets that that fall outside the range of typical needs catered for
- » multiple medical conditions that require special diets, for example allergies combined with dysphagia

In New Zealand an estimated 11 percent of children have an allergy or food intolerance.



10 most common allergens in NZ children:

milk products, egg, peanut, tree nut, sesame, fish, shellfish, kiwifruit, wheat, soy.

» special diets that are already funded for provision by District Health Boards.

Suppliers, and schools making their own lunches, may not feel they are able to provide a special meal safely. This may be because:

- the risk of a mistake in preparing the lunch is too high, or
- the risk to the health and safety of the student is too great.
- the meal requires specialist knowledge to provide a nutritionally balanced diet if there are several food exclusions or complex needs.

In these situations, we will work with schools, whānau and suppliers to find an alternative solution so an appropriate lunch is provided.

Individual preferences

Children's tastes vary and all students will have foods they like and don't like.

It can be challenging to get children to try new foods. It can take five to 15 positive experiences for some children to learn to like a new food, while others adapt faster.

The standard lunches provided by suppliers and schools making their own lunches should be safe and meet nutritional needs. We expect suppliers to consider general food preferences when planning their menus, however Ka Ora, Ka Ako does not require schools and suppliers to cater for individual food aversions and preferences, which would include aversions to different food colours, forms and textures.

A special meal will not be provided where a student '*does not like*' one of the ingredients.

Meeting special dietary needs

Schools and kura should seek any special dietary information from students, parents and whānau and provide this information to their supplier or kitchen manager.

We have provided a standard form to help gather this information which includes recording information on how to keep students with allergies and special dietary requirements safe.

This information should be shared with your suppliers or school kitchen. Unless you have prior permission from a parent, guardian or caregiver, information must be anonymised before sharing with your supplier.

Your supplier or kitchen manager will assess the dietary requirements and advise if they can safely cater for the student. Suppliers are required to meet common special dietary needs as part their standard lunch service. This will be set out in the deliverables template.

Your supplier or kitchen manager may need to discuss any high or complex needs with parents or whānau before deciding if they can safely provide a lunch for that student. This may include organising a supplier or kitchen visit for parents or whānau to meet those preparing lunch, discuss their child's needs and understand what measures will be in place to keep their child safe.

If a lunch cannot be safely provided or parents or whānau cannot agree on a solution, schools should contact their Ka Ora, Ka Ako Senior Advisor and we will work with you to find an alternative solution.

If a supplier wants to opt-out of providing a lunch because the dietary requirements are too complex for them to manage safely, this must also be approved by the Ministry.

All special dietary needs should be reviewed regularly to make sure they are up to date, and if there has been a change in the student need It is important to update suppliers on any changes to dietary requirements as soon as possible.

Glossary of terms

High and Complex Needs special diets	Where, due to either the complex nature or the severity of their condition, a student requires a meal that is produced specifically to meet the needs of the individual, rather than to meet one of the common dietary needs.
Special Diets	Meals that are made to meet the specific needs of a student. This may be for medical, health, religious, or ethical reasons.
Allergies	Immune system responses to a substance that is harmless to most people. Food allergies occur when the substance in the food enters the body and triggers an immune response. e.g. peanut allergy, tree nut allergy, kiwifruit allergy.
Common Allergies	Milk products, egg, peanut, tree nut, sesame, fish, shellfish, kiwifruit, wheat and soy are the ten most common allergens causing reaction in New Zealand children. ¹
Anaphylaxis	The most severe type of allergic reaction resulting in life threatening respiratory and/or cardiovascular symptoms. If untreated anaphylaxis may cause death.
Intolerances	Food intolerance is where the body is unable to digest a certain food, or component of a food. This may be due to a lack of digestive enzymes or a sensitivity to certain chemicals. It does not involve the immune system. e.g. lactose intolerance, gluten intolerance.
Religious Special Diets	Where a student's religious beliefs set requirements about what food can and cannot be eaten, or how the food should be prepared. e.g. halal meats, no pork, no beef, vegetarian
Ethical Special Diets	Where a student's ethical beliefs set requirements about what foods should and should not be consumed. e.g. vegetarian, vegan, pescatarian
Other medically prescribed diets	Diets that have been prescribed or recommended by a medical professional. This may be due to inability to eat certain foods, or the diet may be as part of a treatment plan for a condition. e.g. liquid only or dysphagia diets for children at risk of aspiration where food particles accidentally enter the lungs, ketogenic (very low carbohydrate) diet for epilepsy management.
Food aversion	Strong dislike of a specific food or foods.
Sensory food aversion	Describes a sensory overreaction to particular types of food. The heightened sensory issues are triggered by the qualities of certain foods such as taste, texture, temperature and smell.

¹ Starship Food Allergies Guidelines. <https://www.starship.org.nz/guidelines/food-allergy/>

