

Vegan food and allergens

Food labelled as vegan may pose a risk to people with allergies and intolerances due to potential cross-contamination.

If you, or someone you care for, has a food allergy or intolerance to milk, eggs, crustaceans, fish or molluscs, you should never assume a product labelled as vegan is safe to eat. There is still a chance of cross-contamination with these allergens as vegan food could be prepared in areas and factories where they may be present. You should always check the label to ensure it's safe to eat.

Vegan food and the law

Veganism is a lifestyle choice people can make based on a range of factors, including ethical, environmental, and nutritional.

A vegan label on a food product means that no ingredients of animal origin were intentionally used in the making of the product.

However, the term 'vegan' is not defined in [food law](#), and a vegan label should not be confused with food safety labelling.

The difference between food safety labelling and vegan labelling

Food safety labels such as 'free-from' or 'allergen-free', are a guarantee that the specified allergen is absent from the product. For example, a product labelled as 'free-from milk' is a guarantee that it will not contain milk and is safe for anyone with an allergy or intolerance to milk. Food businesses who produce 'free-from' or 'allergen-free' food products must follow strict processes to prevent cross-contamination, and to ensure that the food they provide is safe to eat.

However, businesses do not have to follow these same strict processes to label food as vegan, and there is still a chance of cross-contamination with allergens of animal origin.

The risk of cross-contamination and vegan food

Vegan food can be prepared in factories and areas where products of animal origin may be present. This could mean that some vegan food products could unintentionally contain allergens.

If a food business has labelled a product as vegan and has identified a risk of cross-contamination, this should be made clear to the consumer. Businesses can do this by using [Precautionary Allergen Labelling \(PAL\)](#), which could be a, 'may contain' statement on the product's packaging.

What should you do?

It's very important to read the label to see if the product is safe for you, even if it is a product labelled as 'vegan'. Look out for a Precautionary Allergen Label (PAL) which will indicate if there is a known risk of cross-contamination.

You should also be very clear about your allergy or intolerance when ordering vegan food in restaurants and cafes. It's important to tell staff about any allergies or intolerances so that the business can take steps to make sure food is safe for you to eat.