



MANAGING FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE

All convenience stores sell food, either wrapped, loose or heated to their customers. Food safety and hygiene laws can be seen as complex and this guide provides an overview of what is expected of you as a business owner.

1. INTRODUCTION

Main principles

Your obligations to customers with regard to food safety and hygiene are mainly contained in the Food Safety Act 1990, Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006, Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006, Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU FIC).

The most important things to know about selling food are:

- The food you sell must be safe for customers to eat.
- Allergenic ingredients must be listed for customers to see.
- You need to have a 'documented food safety management system' in place to ensure that your business complies with procedures in place.
- Your staff must be trained on how to comply with the law.
- Your business **MUST** be registered with your local council environmental health office before it can sell food.

Getting started

The first step to managing food safety and hygiene is to consider the foods you are selling or wish to sell, and how they are being stored. Some of the most common issues are set out on pages 4-5 and this guide includes a template food management system for you to download and complete.

Generally speaking, the more involvement you have in the preparation of food (making sandwiches, heating pies) the more you will have to do.

Written food management system

You must have a written food safety management system in place which you can download here:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbretail>

You will need to complete the safe methods sections so that the system reflects your own practices.

You may already have a system in place, or be part of a chain that provides this for you.

Your staff should be aware of your food safety management system and where the documentation can be found on premises or online.

Getting outside help

Any person starting or taking over a food business should contact the environmental health service at their local council. The council will require you to register with them and should also be able to provide you with a range of additional advice.

Safe storage and display

It is important to handle and store food properly to stop harmful bacteria growing. When food is being stored or displayed for sale, cross contamination and multiplication of harmful bacteria can be minimised by the following safe handling practices:

- Chilled food must be stored at or below 8°C.
- Stock should be rotated on a first-in-first-out basis and damaged stock removed from display and moved to the storage area.
- Food must not be used or sold if its 'use by' date has expired.
- Use separate refrigerators for raw meat/fish and cooked/ready-to-eat foods where possible. Where this is not possible, store raw meat in the bottom of a shared refrigerator below the cooked/ready-to-eat foods.
- Raw meat, stored in freezers, must be adequately wrapped to prevent leakage. If possible, raw meat should be stored in a separate freezer, or part of a freezer, away from cooked/ready-to eat foods.
- If there is a spillage, remove the damaged product and clean the contaminated area with hot and cold soapy water and a food safe disinfectant. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on contact time to ensure an effective clean.
- Refer to your food safety management system for further information, for example in the Safer Food Better Business Pack, safe method Chilled Storage and Displaying Chilled Food.

2. ALLERGENIC INGREDIENTS

You must protect those customers that suffer from allergic reactions to food. There are 14 allergens covered by the law, they are:

- Celery
- Cereals containing gluten
- Crustaceans (crab, lobster, prawn, scampi)
- Eggs
- Fish
- Lupin (sometimes found in bread, pasta and pastries)
- Milk
- Molluscs (mussels, land snails, squid, whelks)
- Mustard
- Tree nuts – including almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts
- Peanuts
- Sesame seeds
- Soya
- Sulphur dioxide, also known as sulphites (often contained in dried fruits, wine and other alcohol)

If you are sourcing food such as sandwiches, bread, cakes and savoury products, then the suppliers of these foods are responsible for putting the required information on a label on the food. If the food is not packaged (and therefore does not have a label attached) then the supplier must provide this information separately along with the food.

You MUST then provide this information to customers so that they are aware of what allergens are contained in the food. You can do this by signposting the consumer to the fact that allergens are present, using a notice, menu, chalkboard or information pack.

Natasha's law

Pre-packed food for direct sale (PPDS) is food that has been put into packaging before it has been offered for sale by the same food business to the final consumer.

If you are preparing food yourself to sell in the store (e.g sandwiches) and are pre-packing it to offer it for sale (PPDS), then you must put a label on it showing the name of the food and an ingredients list including allergenic ingredients. The allergenic ingredients within the food must be emphasised every time they appear in the ingredients list, eg by underlining, use of bold or contrasting colour.

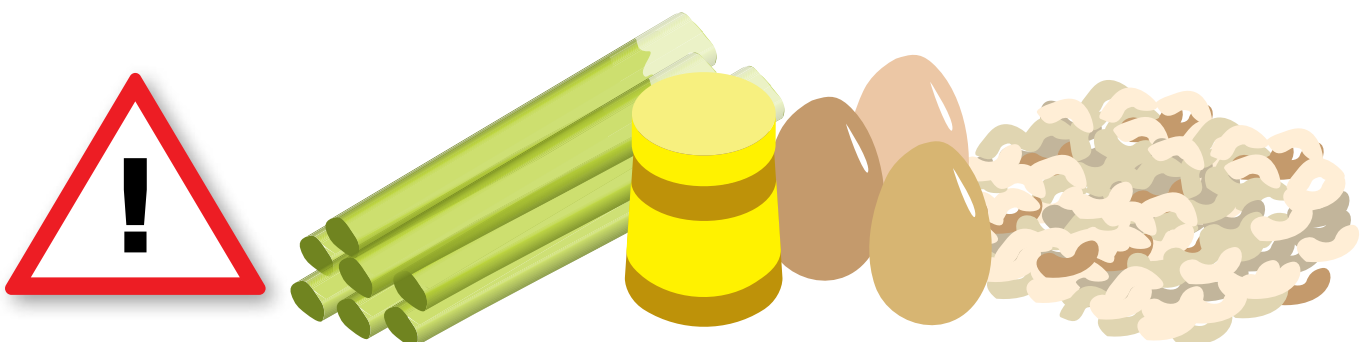
The list needs to be headed by the word 'ingredients' followed by a list of all the ingredients in descending order by weight.

Compound ingredients are ingredients that are made up of more than one ingredient. All the components of the compound ingredient must be declared in brackets immediately after the compound ingredient appears in the ingredient list; the list should be in descending order of weight and emphasise any allergens.

You can still sell unpackaged food and food packed at the consumer's request, but you must ensure allergen information is available to the customer before sale in the usual way.

Food business operators who do not comply with allergen legislation requirements may be subject to prosecution, both under criminal or civil law. Criminal offences may result in a term of imprisonment

Further allergen guidance can be found here:
<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-information-for-pre-packed-and-loose-foods>
[allergen-information-for-pre-packed-and-loose-foods](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-information-for-pre-packed-and-loose-foods)



3. HOW TO MANAGE FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE RISKS

Look closely at your shop and stock area and think about what the food safety and hygiene risks are. Do you have the correct and enough storage space for refrigerated, frozen and shelf stable products? Is there adequate pest proofing and waste storage / removal? Think about whether you have the right procedures in place. Think about whether your members of staff are sufficiently trained for the food safety and hygiene tasks that they may be asked to carry out in your shop. This illustration sets out the main areas that a convenience store must address regarding food safety. It is not intended to be a definitive list.

CHILLED STORAGE

Ready to eat foods such as sandwiches, milk, yoghurts, cheese, cooked meats and ready meals must all be kept below 8 degrees C. Temperature checks should be carried out with a probe on a daily basis and recorded.

SEPARATING CHILLED FOODS

Ready to eat foods and raw meat/fish should be stored and displayed in separate fridges and freezers. If this is not possible, raw meat/fish should be stored on the shelves under ready to eat food.

HANDLING CASH

In practice the risks of transferring pathogenic bacteria from handling foods and cash is very slim, but it is a common complaint and good practice to separate these activities. Where possible separate staff should handle open high risk foods and cash / card readers. If this is not possible staff must wash hands in between handling cash / card readers and open foods, or separate the two activities using gloves or utensils such as tongs, spoons or food wrapping, to handle food.

HOT FOODS

Hot foods must be stored or displayed at temperatures above 63 degrees C, a probe thermometer should be used and records of these checks maintained. If the hot food is displayed at temperatures below 63 degrees C then it must be disposed of within two hours.

BEST BEFORE / USE BY DATES

Most prepacked foodstuffs must carry a date of minimum durability. This can be either a 'best before' date or a 'use by' date. These date marks must be in a prominent place on the label, if this is difficult the manufacturer must state where the date can be found, for example best before: see date on lid.

A 'use by' date must be used for food which is highly perishable and is likely, after a short period, to become an immediate danger to human health. Examples are cooked meat and some ready prepared meals. 'Use by' dates are made up of either a day and month or a day, month and year. It is an offence to sell or display for sale any food after its 'use by' date.

'Best before' dates are an indicator of quality not safety. Food that has passed its best before date may be sold at a reduced price to prevent wastage.

PEST CONTROL

All food areas must be free from pests, including vermin and flying insects. You should seek the advice of a professional pest control company.



HAND WASHING

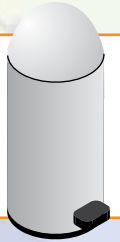
Staff toilets must have a wash basin with antibacterial soap, hot and cold running water and suitable hand drying facilities.

STORE ROOM

Food must not be kept on the floor of the store room - shelving, cupboards or roll cages must be used instead.

WASTE

Keep waste well away from food. Waste must be stored in lidded containers to avoid contamination with food.



COVERING FOODS

All foods must be protected from the risk of contamination. This means it must be stored wrapped, boxed or in lidded containers. Food left open on display must be either protected by a screen or be covered by a lid, mesh cover or cling-film, etc.

CROSS CONTAMINATION

Raw food (such as uncooked sausages) and ready to eat foods (such as sandwiches and pies) must be stored and handled separately. Members of staff must wash their hands with antibacterial soap between handling raw food and ready to eat food.

HOT FOODS

If you are cooking on site, ensure food is cooked to a core temperature of 75 degrees C for at least 30 seconds. A probe thermometer should be used to check temperatures and results recorded.



WEIGHING SCALES

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.

CHOPPING BOARDS

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.

KNIVES

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.



4. RECORD KEEPING

You have to maintain a documented food safety management system. The purpose of these documents is to outline all of the food hazards present in the business, and how they are controlled. The checks that you carry out in your business will demonstrate that the controls identified are working properly.

Records to be maintained:

- **Staff training certificates:** If staff are preparing foods such as sandwiches, or cooking foods such as pies then they need to be trained to 'Basic Food Hygiene' level also known as CIEH Level 2 Food Hygiene. These training records should be retained by you (your local environmental health office can provide this training or advise on appropriate local food hygiene courses).
- **Temperature control checks:** The records of these must be retained for at least six months.

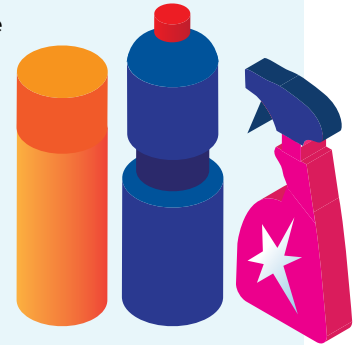
FRIDGE AND FREEZER TEMPERATURE RECORD SHEET ACS the voice of local shops

The temperature of all refrigerators and freezers should be checked at least once every day. A separate record should be kept of any routine servicing or repairs which is carried out.

Cabinet type	Cabinet description	Target temperature	Recorded temperature							Additional comments	Initials of staff member
			Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday		

Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 requires food which allows food poisoning bacteria to grow on them to be stored at or below 5°C. However we recommend that fridge should be adjusted to between 4°C and 5°C. Frozen food should be stored at -18°C or colder.

- **Daily stock rotation checks:** The records of these must be retained for at least six months.
- **Cleaning records:** There should be a cleaning schedule in place that lists what needs cleaning, when and how. Records should be kept to show compliance with this schedule and retained for six months.
- **Pest control records:** If you have a contract with a professional pest control company, they should leave you with a 'pest control book' which should be kept on the premises. If you do not use an external company, you should check at least once a week for signs of any pest activity (droppings, gnawed food, dead bodies) and these checks should be recorded.



- **Documented food safety management system:** This may be your own written procedures identifying hazards and how hazards are controlled and monitored, or, you may complete the FSA Safer Food Better Business. <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbretail>

5. FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME

Environmental Health Officers will inspect your premises and 'score' it according to food hygiene compliance. These scores are translated into a food hygiene rating score (with zero being the lowest and 5 being the highest score).

You can expect to be notified of your food hygiene rating score within 14 days of the inspection and a sticker will be provided for you to display in your window.

If you disagree with the score given, there is a right to appeal and the letter that you receive will explain how to do this. You will also have the right to request a re-inspection of your premises (there may be a charge for this).

Your food hygiene rating score will be displayed on the Food Standards Agency website here: <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/>

Those stores that only sell low risk packaged foods are exempt from the food hygiene rating system.

In Wales and Northern Ireland it is mandatory to display your sticker. Failure to display or displaying the wrong rating may result in a fixed penalty notice being served with a fine of £200.



6. MORE COMPLEX FOOD PREPARATION

This guide has been developed for stores that are performing basic food preparation activities such as making sandwiches and heating pies. If you are carrying out more complex food preparation activities such as:

- Cooking.
- Cooling.
- Making meals such as curries.
- Making samosas, pies and other savoury goods.
- Making pasta salads.

Then you should follow the guidance in the government's 'Safer Food Better Business' guide here:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbcaterers>

7. IMPORTED FOOD LABELLING REQUIREMENTS

Retailers must make sure that all imported food and drink has all mandatory information in **English**, although it can also have other languages. It is sufficient for this to be over stickered.

The following information is mandatory on prepacked foods:

- The **name** of the food- a full description of the food not just a brand name.
- An **ingredients** list with any of the 14 **allergenic** ingredients emphasised (such as in bold).
- Quantitative ingredient declarations (QUID).
- A **nutritional declaration**.
- A **best before** or **use by** date.
- A metric net **quantity** declaration, ie kilograms or grams for solids, and in litres, centilitres or millilitres for liquids (you can include an imperial indication but it must not be more prominent than the metric).
- The **name and address** of the food business based in the UK.
- **Storage** instructions (where required).
- **Instructions** for use (where required).
- **Origin** marking (where required).
- **Alcoholic strength** (for beverages containing more than 1.2% by volume).

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is provided by the Association of Convenience Stores in consultation with Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards. It was last updated in January 2024. Please refer to the ACS website for the most current version of this guidance.

ACS Primary Authority Scheme

This advice was developed by ACS, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; as part of a dedicated primary authority scheme. This means that all the advice that has this mark against it is 'Assured Advice'.

Assured Advice means that if you adopt this policy in your business, then it must be respected by all other local authorities and they cannot ask you to adopt a different policy.



This guide covers a range of different issues of best practice and law. Those that qualify as assured advice are marked by this hallmark.

To benefit from assured advice you must sign up to the ACS scheme. All ACS members can sign up to the ACS Primary Authority Scheme for details of how to join up visit www.acs.org.uk/advice

CONTACT

Our website

www.acs.org.uk

Our social media

@ACS_localshops on X / Twitter and Instagram

Association of Convenience Stores on LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube