

Harvard University Dining Services' Process for Meal Accommodations

Introduction

This document outlines the process required to connect students requiring meal-related medical accommodations with Harvard University Dining Services (HUDS). Conditions under which a student might request meal-related accommodations include (but are not limited to): allergies, medically-diagnosed food intolerances, illnesses requiring dietary modifications, and/or facilities access. This process involves commitment from two primary parties: the individual student and HUDS management. For this reason, communication between the student and HUDS is paramount.

HUDS strives to provide information about the food items available in the dining halls in order to make the student dining experience as stress-free as possible. This information includes online nutrient and ingredient details, in-person signage, point-of-service labeling, and one-on-one interactions. HUDS also works closely with the Accessible Education Office (AEO), to provide students with the tools they need to manage within the First-Year and House dining systems. Ultimately, the goal of this process is to ensure safety and satisfaction throughout the student's tenure at Harvard.

Your Role as a Student

To optimize your experience in the dining halls, it is recommended you adhere to the following procedures:

- 1. Notifying AEO (the Accessible Education Office) of your medical dietary needs.** Access the form at <https://aefas.harvard.edu/students/register>. Be prepared to provide medical documentation and attend meeting(s) with AEO, and later, with dining services, to determine how we can best accommodate your needs.
- 2. Consult with your medical and dietary support team to understand your food allergies and/or intolerances.**
 - Recognize common sources of, and avoid, foods to which you are allergic.
 - Recognize symptoms of allergic reactions.
 - Know how and when to tell someone you might be having an allergy-related problem.

- Properly carry and use medications (EpiPen, Benadryl, etc.).
- Carry emergency contact information with you.
- Remain aware of cross-contact. Since many of the stations in the dining halls are self-serve, cross-contact is possible.
 - Ask dining associates to change their gloves or to use new utensils and/or a fresh cooking pan at made-to order stations.
 - Access designated allergen-friendly foods (shown to you during your initial dietary accommodations meeting) as needed.
 - Be wary of fried foods, as the fryers are utilized for multiple types of foods that could potentially contain your allergen.

3. Reading menus and ingredient information available online at <https://dining.harvard.edu>. Menus for the day can be filtered by the allergen/ingredient of concern – all top 8 allergens as well as alcohol and pork are available.

- Labels are also available during service that list allergens and a short summary of ingredients (this list is not always comprehensive due to space constraints). *When in doubt about ingredients in a dish*, direct your questions to a manager or refer to a HUDS staff member in a red shirt who can direct you to a manager or person in charge.

4. Communicating and engaging with HUDS staff continuously to ensure your needs are being met and your concerns are addressed.

Harvard University Dining Services' Commitment

HUDS commits to a safe and stress-free dining experience by:

1. **Attending an initial meeting with an AEO-registered student.** This meeting includes an AEO representative, the HUDS registered dietitian, a HUDS culinarian, and a dining hall manager. This meeting helps HUDS gather information about your dietary-related needs, provide you with solutions and accommodations, and answers any questions you may have. This meeting will allow you to make informed decisions in the dining hall and will instruct you on ways to safely access the food of your choice.

2. Providing the student with reasonable accommodations that may include:

- Access to specific off-menu items (e.g. gluten-free pasta) in the case of allergies.
- Use of the “email method,” which allows for meals prepared separately from the regular menu to decrease risk of cross-contamination. Students will email their dining hall management team with their meal selection(s) for the following day based on the online menu. Menu items can be modified to omit an allergen or simplify prepared menu items (e.g. steamed broccoli, grilled chicken without sauce, etc.). The specially-prepared meals are then placed in a designated container that the student will use throughout their four years at Harvard. Allergen-free meal prep kits are also available for students with severe allergies.
- Other accessibility-related accommodations.

3. Providing up to date ingredient and allergen information for planned menu items, both online and at the point-of-service. HUDS makes every effort to identify ingredients that may trigger allergic or other adverse reactions for individuals with food allergies or intolerances. Allergens on labels and online are marked when an item contains the allergen or if the product was made/processed in a facility or on equipment with an allergen. However, due to the volume of meals served, along with food product changes from our vendors, we cannot guarantee that every allergen or gluten source in the food served will be identified and labeled on the menu cards. There is a small possibility that, without notice to us, manufacturers of the commercial foods we use can change the formulation at any time. To reduce this risk, we regularly audit ingredient labels and have a strict no-substitution policy from our vendors.

4. Training staff about allergens. Our staff is trained and educated on food allergies and gluten-free diets on an ongoing basis (through various annual trainings, in-unit refreshers, and Allergen Awareness Certifications). Many of our food production staff are also ServSafe-certified and trained to prevent cross-contamination. There is always a manager or person in charge who is ServSafe certified and trained in allergen awareness on shift in every dining hall.

5. Checking in on students’ experiences throughout the semester and troubleshooting any issues that arise. After the initial dietary accommodations meeting, the HUDS registered dietitian will follow up with you to assess your ongoing access to dining hall meals with your accommodation plan. Modifications can be made based on feedback.

We make every effort to provide you with the information you need to make decisions about which foods to eat in the dining halls. However, the possibility for a reaction exists in community dining. If you have been prescribed an auto injector, you should always carry it, as HUDS staff do not have access to EpiPens and are not trained to administer them. Instead, *HUDS staff is trained to immediately call for medical assistance for any guest experiencing an allergic reaction.*