

Navigating Dietary Restrictions

Understanding restrictions helps ensure everyone can eat safely and comfortably. Read through this fact sheet to learn about options for different medical and preferential dietary needs.

Vegetarian/Vegan

A preference, or dietary/cultural need to avoid meat or animal products.

Guidelines:

- Vegetarian: no meat; may include dairy/eggs
- Vegan: no animal products at all
- Check for hidden animal ingredients (broth, gelatin, lard, fish sauce, whey)

Safe options:

- Beans, lentils, tofu, hummus
- Veggie burgers or plant-based nuggets
- Eggs and cheese for vegetarians

Gluten-Free

A medical need to avoid gluten due to sensitivity, celiac disease*, or wheat allergy*.

Guidelines:

- Avoid wheat, barley, rye, and foods made with regular flour
- Use gluten-free substitutes when needed
- Check labels for: Wheat, Barley, Rye, Malt, Brewer's yeast

Safe options:

- Naturally gluten-free and/or gluten-free labeled products

Kosher

Religious dietary laws that guide how foods are selected and prepared.

Guidelines:

- No pork or shellfish
- Meat and dairy cannot be served together
- Foods may need kosher certification

Safe options:

- Look for symbols: OU • K • OK • Star-K

Nut-Free*

A medical need to avoid peanuts and/or tree nuts due to an allergy.

Guidelines:

- Avoid peanuts, tree nuts, and products processed with nuts
- Prevent cross-contact during prep and service
- Read labels every time and check for: peanuts, almonds, cashews, walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts, *"Processed in a facility with nuts"*

Safe options:

- Sunflower seed butter
- Nut-free granola bars and snacks
- Baked goods made in nut-free facilities

Dairy/Lactose-Free*

A medical need to avoid dairy or lactose due to an allergy or intolerance.

Guidelines:

- Lactose-free: avoid lactose but may tolerate cheese/yogurt
- Dairy-free: avoid all milk ingredients
- Check ingredients in breads, sauces, mashed potatoes, and desserts for: milk, whey, casein, butter, cheese, cream, *"Contains milk"*

Safe options:

- Approved lactose-free and plant-based milk substitutes
- Dairy-free cheese, yogurt, margarine

***Considered a medical dietary accommodation requiring a medical statement and applicable meal pattern modification.**

Review the online training ["How to Complete the Medical Statement for Students with Special Dietary Accommodations"](#) for more information on documenting medical accommodations that may or may not meet the meal pattern.