



Food allergies: Understanding food labels

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires food manufacturers to list the eight most common ingredients that trigger food allergies. Most other countries have similar rules. Information about food allergies has to be written in simple terms that adults and older children can understand. The eight foods included in food allergy labeling account for an estimated 90 percent of allergic reactions. These eight foods are:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts (such as almonds, cashews, walnuts)
- Fish (such as bass, cod, flounder)
- Shellfish (such as crab, lobster, shrimp)
- Soy
- Wheat

Understanding food labels - U.S. food labels take some of the guesswork out of label reading, helping you more easily identify foods that could cause an allergic reaction. Here are answers to a few common questions about food label requirements.

- **What foods are labeled?** Domestic or imported packaged food is required to have a label that lists whether the product contains one of the top eight allergens.
- **What allergy information is included on the label?** The label lists the type of allergen — for example, the type of tree nut (almond, walnut) or the type of crustacean shellfish (crab, shrimp) — as well as any ingredient that contains a protein from the eight major food allergens. The labels also include any allergens found in flavorings, colorings or other additives.
- **What foods aren't labeled?** Fresh produce, eggs, fresh meat and certain highly refined oils don't require listing on labels.

Unintended ingredients - Food labeling laws require food allergens to be identified even in very small amounts — but only when they're contained as an ingredient. Manufacturers aren't required to include warnings about food allergens accidentally introduced during manufacturing or packaging (cross-contamination). This potentially can cause trouble if you're very sensitive to food allergens. The FDA is working to make the format of these advisory labels more consistent so that it's easier to identify which products contain allergens. When in doubt about whether a product contains something you're allergic to, it's best to avoid it until you check with your doctor.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/food-allergy/in-depth/food-allergies>

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