

Tips for Avoiding Your Allergen

Most packaged foods in the U.S. are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Meat and poultry products are regulated by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The FDA requires that manufacturers list the nine major allergens in plain English on package labels if the food:

- includes an ingredient that is a major food allergen (milk, wheat, egg, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, crustacean shellfish, soy, and sesame);
- includes an ingredient derived from a major food allergen, such as whey, which is from milk.

An ingredient that is a major food allergen or derived from a major food allergen cannot be used in FDA allowed groupings, such as “spice” or “flavor,” and must be listed separately, such as peanut flavoring.

For a Wheat-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain wheat or any of these ingredients:

bread crumbs	farina	hydrolyzed wheat protein	sprouted wheat
bulgur	farro	Kamut®	triticale
cereal extract	flour (all purpose, bread, cake, durum, enriched, graham, high gluten, high protein, instant, pastry, self-rising, soft wheat, steel ground, stone ground, whole wheat)	matzoh, matzoh meal (also spelled as matzo, matzah, or matza)	vital wheat gluten
club wheat		pasta	wheat (bran, durum, germ, gluten, grass, malt, sprouts, starch)
couscous		seitan	wheat bran hydrolysate
cracker meal		semolina	wheat germ oil
durum		spelt	wheat grass
einkorn			wheat protein isolate
emmer	freakah		

Wheat is sometimes found in the following:

glucose syrup	starch (gelatinized starch, modified starch, modified food starch, vegetable starch)	surimi
oats		
soy sauce		

For an Egg-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain eggs or any of these ingredients:

albumin (also spelled albumen)	eggnog	lysozyme	surimi
egg (dried, powdered, solids, white, yolk)	globulin	mayonnaise	vitellin
	livetin	meringue (meringue powder)	

Egg is sometimes found in the following:

baked goods	egg substitutes	lecithin	meatloaf or meatballs
breaded items	fried rice	marzipan	nougat
drink foam (alcoholic, specialty coffee)	ice cream	marshmallows	pasta

Keep the following in mind:

- Individuals who are allergic to chicken eggs are often advised not to eat eggs from other birds because the proteins are similar.
- Even though it is the egg white that contains the allergenic proteins, people with egg allergy must avoid eggs completely. The FDA considers eggs from domesticated chickens, ducks, geese, quail, and other birds to be “eggs” for the purpose of food allergen labeling.

For a Sesame-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain sesame or any of these ingredients:

Benne, benne seed, benniseed
Gingelly, gingelly oil
Gomasio (sesame salt)
Halvah

Sesame flour
Sesame oil*
Sesame paste
Sesame salt

Sesame seed
Sesamol
Sesamum indicum
Sesemolina

Sim sim
Tahini, Tahina, Tehina Til

**Because sesame oil is not refined, it is recommended that it be avoided by individuals with sesame allergy.*

Sesame may also be found in non-food items, including:

Cosmetics (including soaps and creams)

Medications
Nutritional supplements

Pet foods

In non-food items, the scientific name for sesame, *Sesamum indicum*, may be on the label.

For a Soy-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain soy or any of these ingredients:

edamame
miso
natto

soy (soy albumin, soy cheese, soy fiber, soy flour, soy grits, soy ice cream, soy milk, soy nuts, soy sprouts, soy yogurt)

soya
soybean (curd, granules)
soy protein (concentrate, hydrolyzed, isolate)
shoyu

soy sauce
tamari
tempeh
textured vegetable protein (TVP)
tofu

Soy is sometimes found in the following:

vegetable broth

vegetable gum

vegetable starch

Keep the following in mind:

- The FDA exempts highly refined soybean oil from being labeled as a food allergen. Studies show most allergic individuals can safely eat soy oil that has been highly refined (not cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded soybean oil).
- Most individuals allergic to soy can safely eat soy lecithin.

Follow your doctor's advice regarding these ingredients.

For a Tree Nut-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain tree nuts or any of these ingredients:

almond
artificial nuts
beechnut
Brazil nut
butternut
cashew
chestnut
chinquapin nut
filbert/hazelnut

gianduja (a chocolate-hazelnut mixture)
ginkgo nut
hickory nut
litchi/lychee/lychee nut
macadamia nut
marzipan/almond paste
Nangai nut

natural nut extract (e.g., almond, walnut)
nut butters (e.g., cashew butter)
nut meal
nut meat
nut paste (e.g., almond paste)
nut pieces
pecan

pili nut
pine nut (also referred to as Indian, pignoli, pigñolia, pignon, piñon, and pinyon nut)
pistachio
praline
shea nut
walnut

Tree nuts are sometimes found in the following:

black walnut hull extract (flavoring)

natural nut extract
nut distillates/alcoholic extracts
nut oils (e.g., walnut oil, almond oil)

pesto
walnut hull extract (flavoring)

Mortadella (may contain pistachios)

Keep the following in mind:

Coconut is not a tree nut, and it was removed from the FDA labeling guidance regarding tree nuts in January 2025. That means it will not be treated as a major food allergen, and it will not be listed in a "Contains: tree nuts (coconut)" statement on food labels. But coconut can be a food allergen and should be listed individually in the ingredient list when used in a food.

For a Crustacean Shellfish-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain shellfish or any of these ingredients:

barnacle crab	crawfish (crawdada, crayfish, ecrevisse) krill	lobster (langouste, langoustine, Moreton bay bugs, scampi, tomalley)	prawns shrimp (crevette, scampi)
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Your doctor may advise you to avoid mollusks or these ingredients:

abalone clams (cherrystone, geoduck, littleneck, pismo, quahog) cockle	cuttlefish limpet (lapas, opihi) mussels octopus	oysters periwinkle scallops sea cucumber	sea urchin snails (escargot) squid (calamari) whelk (Turban shell)
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Shellfish are sometimes found in the following:

bouillabaisse cuttlefish ink	glucosamine fish stock	seafood flavoring (e.g., crab or clam extract)	surimi
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Keep the following in mind:

- Avoid seafood restaurants. Shellfish may come in contact with other foods during storage and preparation.
- Stay away from areas where shellfish is being cooked. Shellfish protein can get in the steam released during cooking.
- The FDA does not consider mollusk shellfish—such as oysters, clams, and scallops—to be major food allergens, which means major food allergen labeling laws do not apply.

For a Milk-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain milk or any of these ingredients:

butter, butter fat, butter oil, butter acid butter ester(s) buttermilk casein casein hydrolysate caseinates (in all forms) cheese cottage cheese cream	curds custard diacetyl ghee half-and-half lactalbumin, lactalbumin phosphate lactoferrin lactose lactulose	milk (in all forms, including condensed, derivative, dry, evaporated, goat's milk and milk from other animals, lowfat, malted, milkfat, nonfat, powder, protein, skimmed, solids, whole) milk protein hydrolysate pudding	Recaldent® rennet casein sour cream, sour cream solids sour milk solids tagatose whey (in all forms) whey protein hydrolysate yogurt
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Milk is sometimes found in the following:

artificial butter flavor baked goods caramel candies	chocolate (including dark chocolate) lactic acid starter culture and other bacterial cultures	luncheon meat, hot dogs, sausages margarine	nisin nondairy products nougat
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Keep the following in mind:

- Individuals who are allergic to cow's milk are often advised to avoid milk from other animals because the proteins are similar. The FDA considers milk from domesticated cows, goats, sheep, and other ruminants to be "milk" for the purpose of food allergen labeling.
- Some commercially available forms of whey and casein are not animal-produced, and therefore may be promoted as "vegan-friendly," but they still contain milk protein and act as food allergens.
- Milk can be used in personal care items, and is sometimes used as an inactive ingredient in medications and medicated products (such as toothpaste).

For a Fish-Free Diet

Fish is sometimes found in the following:

barbecue sauce	fish gelatin (kosher gelatin, marine gelatin)	fishmeal	seafood flavoring
bouillabaisse	fish oil	nuoc mam (Vietnamese name for fish sauce; be aware of culturally-specific names)	shark cartilage
Caesar salad	fish sauce imitation fish or shellfish	pizza (anchovy topping)	shark fin
caviar	isinglass lutefisk maw, maws	roe	surimi
fish flavoring	fish stock	salad dressing	sushi, sashimi
fish flour			Worcestershire sauce
fish fume			

Keep the following in mind:

- Avoid seafood restaurants. Fish may come in contact with other foods during storage and preparation, including fish protein released into fryer oil during the deep fry process.
- Stay away from areas where fish is being cooked. Fish protein can get in the steam released during cooking.

For a Peanut-Free Diet

Avoid foods that contain peanuts or any of these ingredients:

artificial nuts	goobers	monkey nuts	peanut butter
beer nuts	ground nuts	nut pieces	peanut flour
cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil	mixed nuts	nut meat	peanut protein hydrolysate

Peanut is sometimes found in the following:

candy (including chocolate candy)	egg rolls	marzipan	nougat
chili	enchilada sauce	mole sauce	

Keep the following in mind:

- The FDA exempts highly refined peanut oil, also known as arachis oil, from being labeled as a food allergen. Studies show that most allergic individuals can safely eat peanut oil that has been highly refined (not cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil). Follow your doctor's advice.
- Some people with peanut allergy may also react to lupine (also called lupin), and/or pea protein. Be sure to discuss the risk with an allergist.
- Sunflower seeds, tree nuts and alternative nut butters are sometimes produced on equipment shared with peanuts. Contact the manufacturer

For more information, visit: foodallergy.org/foodlabels