

Hidden Food Allergens

The following lists will help you spot common sources of the top 14 food allergens, including “hidden” or less obvious sources. Read labels closely and ask the food manufacturer if you have questions about ingredients.

TOP 14 FOOD ALLERGENS ACROSS THE GLOBE^{1,2}

1. Milk
2. Eggs
3. Fish
4. Crustacean shellfish
5. Tree nuts
6. Peanuts
7. Wheat/gluten
8. Soybeans
9. Sesame
10. Celery
11. Sulfites
12. Mustard
13. Lupin
14. Mollusks

For help understanding the difference between a food allergy, sensitivity, and intolerance, please see IFM’s **Adverse Food Reactions** handout.

Sources of Top Food Allergens^{3-8*}

MILK

- **Avoid:** butter, buttermilk, casein, cheese, cream, ghee, half-and-half, ice cream, kefir, lactalbumin, lactoglobulin, lactose, milk, rennet, sherbet, whey, yogurt
- **Also check:** artificial butter flavor, au gratin foods, baked goods, caramel, chocolate, chowder, cocoa drinks, crackers, cream soup, creamed food, custard, desserts, gravy, lactic acid starter culture, malted milk, margarine, mashed potatoes, “non-dairy” products, nougat (in candy), omelet, pancakes/waffles, processed meat, pudding, salad dressing, scalloped dishes, soufflé

EGGS

- **Avoid:** eggs (whites and yolks), egg noodles, eggnog, any parts of eggs (albumin, avidin, globulin, livetin, lysozyme, vitellin), ingredients with “ovo” or “ova” in the name (like ovalbumin), mayonnaise (unless vegan), meringue, omelet
- **Also check:** baked goods, baking mixes, Bavarian cream, breaded foods, cream pie, custard, egg substitutes, foamy drinks, French toast, fried rice, fritters, ice cream, lecithin, lemon curd, marshmallow creme, meatballs, meatloaf, nougat, pancakes, pasta, quiche, salad dressing, sauces (hollandaise, tartar, etc.), sorbet, soufflé, soup, surimi (imitation crab), tempura (batter-fried dish), waffles

FISH

- **Avoid:** finned fish, such as anchovy, bass, catfish, cod, flounder, haddock, halibut, herring, mahi mahi, pollock, salmon, sole, tilapia, trout, tuna; fish products, such as fish oil, fish soup or stew (such as bouillabaisse), fish sticks, nuoc mam (fish sauce), roe (fish eggs, such as caviar), sashimi (thinly sliced raw fish), surimi
- **Also check:** barbecue sauce, Caesar salad/dressing, ceviche (seafood appetizer), kimchi (Korean fermented vegetables), pizza toppings (such as anchovies), spreads (such as taramasalata), sushi, Worcestershire sauce

CRUSTACEAN SHELLFISH

- **Avoid:** barnacles, coral, crab, crawfish (crawdad, crayfish, écrevisse), krill, lobster (langouste, langoustine, tomalley), Moreton Bay bugs, prawns, scampi, shrimp
- **Also check:** Asian dishes, bouillabaisse, ceviche (marinated raw seafood), étouffée (Cajun stew), fish sauce, fish stock, fried rice, gumbo, jambalaya, paella (a rice dish), seafood flavoring, surimi, sushi

*Not a comprehensive list. If several varieties are in a category (such as fish or nuts), check with your allergist to verify which to avoid. Lists don’t include non-food items.



Oils and Allergens

In the United States, certain highly refined oils made from top food allergens, including peanuts and soybeans, aren't required to be labeled as food allergens.⁵ Similarly, European Union rules don't require allergen labeling for highly refined soybean oil.⁸ This is because the refining process removes the allergy-causing proteins from the oil.⁵

The words "cold pressed," "expeller pressed," or "extruded" mean the oil is NOT highly refined and should be avoided if you are allergic to the source of the oil.⁵ Contact the manufacturer if you are uncertain whether an oil is highly refined. You should also check with your allergist for personalized advice on how to approach highly refined oils.

TREE NUTS

- **Avoid:** almond, beechnut, Brazil nut, butternut, cashew, chestnut, chinquapin nut, coconut[†], filbert/hazelnut, macadamia nut, mandelonas (almond-flavored peanut product), mortadella (an Italian cold cut), Nangai nut, natural nut extracts, nut products (milks, butters, flours, etc.), pecan, pine nut, pistachio, unrefined nut oil (cold, expeller pressed), walnut, other tree nuts
- **Also check:** alcoholic beverages (flavorings), baked goods, barbecue sauce, cereal (such as muesli), chocolates, crackers, desserts, energy bars, flavored coffee, gianduja (a chocolate-nut mixture), marinades, marzipan (almond paste), natural flavorings, nougat, ice cream, pesto, sauces, trail mix

[†]Check with your allergist, as most people allergic to tree nuts can eat coconut.

PEANUTS

- **Avoid:** mandelonas, peanuts, peanut products (peanut butter, sauce, etc.), peanut protein hydrolysate, unrefined peanut oil[†] (cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded)
- **Also check:** artificial flavorings, baked goods, candy, cereal (such as granola), chili, chocolate, egg rolls, enchilada sauce, ethnic foods (such as African, Asian, Mexican), glazes, hydrolyzed plant/vegetable protein, ice cream treats, marinades, mixed nuts, natural flavoring, nougat, pudding, sauces (such as hot sauce, mole sauce), trail mix, vegetarian meat substitutes

[†]Ask your allergist if you can eat highly refined peanut oil.

WHEAT[†]

- **Avoid:** bulgur, couscous, durum, einkorn, emmer, farina, farro, flour (all-purpose, graham, whole wheat, etc.), freekeh, Khorasan wheat, malt, malt extract, matzo,[‡] oats,[‡] pasta,[‡] seitan (meat substitute), semolina, spelt, sprouted wheat, tabbouleh (salad), triticale, wheat (any part or form, such as bran, germ, gluten), wheat germ oil, wheat protein isolate, wheatgrass
- **Also check:** alcohol, Asian cuisine, baked goods, baking mixes, beer, bouillon, breaded/batter-fried foods, candy, caramel color, cereal, cereal extract, coffee substitutes, crackers, dextrin, drink mixes, flavorings, food starch, glucose syrup, gravy, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, maltodextrin, pancakes/waffles, plant-based meat alternatives, processed meat (hot dogs, sausage, etc.), salad dressing, sauces (shoyu, soy, tamari, teriyaki, etc.), soufflé, soup, surimi, texturized vegetable protein (TVP), vegetable gum

[†]In some areas, such as countries in the European Union, non-wheat grains (barley, rye, and contaminated oats) that contain gluten are also covered by allergen labeling laws.

[‡]Unless certified gluten-free.

SOYBEANS

- **Avoid:** bean curd (yuba), edamame, kinako (roasted soybean flour), koya dofu (freeze-dried tofu), miso, natto, shoyu (Japanese-style soy sauce), soybeans, soy oil[†] (cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded), soy nuts, soy products (such as soy cheese, soy milk, soy yogurt), soy protein (concentrate, hydrolyzed, isolate), soy sauce, tamari, tempeh, teriyaki sauce, tofu
- **Also check:** artificial or natural flavoring, Asian cuisine, baby foods, baked goods, broths and soups, cereal, chocolate, cooking spray, crackers, high protein packaged foods, hydrolyzed plant/vegetable protein, ice cream, infant formulas, lecithin, margarine, MSG, processed meats, salad dressings, sauces, textured vegetable protein (TVP), tuna (canned), vegetable gum or starch

[†]Ask your allergist if you can eat highly refined soybean (vegetable) oil.

Cross-Contact

Cross-contact is when an allergenic food comes in contact with a “safe” food or object. This could cause an unsuspected allergic response to a food.¹³

Cross-contact could happen in a store’s display case, such as one type of seafood touching another, or at a restaurant that uses the same deep-fat fryer for multiple foods.

Some other potential sources of cross-contact are deli meat slicers, toasters, utensils, countertops, and factory equipment.

SESAME

- **Avoid:** gingelly (sesame oil), goma dofu (sesame custard), gomasio (sesame salt), halvah (sesame candy), pasteli (sesame bars), sesame (benne or sim sim) seeds, sesame oil,[†] tahini (sesame butter)
- **Also check:** Asian/Indian/Middle Eastern cuisine, baba ghanoush (eggplant dip), baked goods (such as bagels, buns), bread crumbs, cereal (such as granola), chips (such as pita), crackers (such as melba toast), falafel, flavorings, hummus, marinades, nutrition bars, processed meats (such as sausage), salad dressing, sauces, snack mix, soups, sushi, tempeh, vegetarian burgers

[†]Sesame oil is not highly refined. Avoid it if you are allergic to sesame.

CELERY

- **Avoid:** celeriac (celery root), celery juice, celery leaves, celery powder, celery salt, celery seeds, celery stalks
- **Also check:** condiments (such as marmite), processed meat (such as bacon, lunch meat), salad dressing, sauces, smoothies, soup, spice mixes, stew, stock, stock cubes, tomato/vegetable juice

SULFITES (SULPHITES)[†]

- **Avoid:** potassium bisulfite, potassium metabisulfite, sodium bisulfite, sodium metabisulfite, sodium sulfite, sulfur dioxide
- **Also check:** beer, bottled lemon or lime juice, carbonated drinks, coconut milk, condiments, cordials, dehydrated/dried vegetables (such as onions, pre-cut potatoes), dried fruits (such as apricots), fresh or frozen shrimp and prawns, frozen potato products, fruit juice concentrate, grapes (may be sulfite-treated), grape juice, guacamole, maraschino cherries, mustard, pickled foods, processed meat, salad dressing, sauerkraut, tofu/bean curd, vegetable juice, vinegar, wine

[†]Labeling is generally required at concentrations of 10 parts per million (ppm) or more.

MUSTARD

- **Avoid:** mostarda (an Italian condiment), mustard greens, mustard seed oil,[†] mustard powder, mustard seeds, table mustard, and other mustard products
- **Also check:** curry, fish paste, ketchup, marinades, mayonnaise, piccalilli (relish), pickles, processed meats, salad dressing, sauces (barbecue, tomato, etc.), stock

[†]Mustard seed oil is generally cold pressed. Avoid it if you are allergic to mustard.

LUPIN[†]

- **Avoid:** lupin seeds/legumes, lupin flour, and other lupin products
- **Also check:** certain European foods (bread, breadcrumbs, crepes, deep-fried vegetables, pancakes, pastries, pie, pizza, waffles), gluten-free products (such as baked goods, pasta), low-carb/keto-friendly products (such as lupin pasta), vegan products (lupin may be used in place of milk)

[†]Lupin cross-reacts with peanut at a high rate, so some people with peanut allergy may also need to avoid lupin. Check with your allergist.

MOLLUSKS

- **Avoid:** abalone, clams, cockle, cuttlefish and cuttlefish ink (used to flavor or color some pasta, rice, or sauces), limpets, mussels, octopus, oysters, periwinkle, razor shell, scallops, sea cucumber, sea urchin, snails (escargot), squid (calamari), whelk (sea snail), and other mollusks
- **Also check:** Asian stir-fries, ceviche, paella, pizza topping, sauces made from mollusks (such as oyster sauce), soup, stock



TIP: Check the ingredients list for your allergens every time you buy a food product because the ingredients may change. If you see wording such as “New and improved,” be extra alert to ingredient changes.

Food Allergen Labeling

Over 60 countries have laws that require the most common food allergens in their region to be clearly labeled on packaged foods.⁹ In the United States, the top nine food allergens must be labeled on food packages, and countries in the European Union require labeling of the top 14 food allergens (see the list on page 1).^{1,2} Many of these same food allergens are also required to be labeled in other regions, but there are some differences between countries.^{2,10} Check with the food regulatory agency in your region for details.

Allergen labeling can make it easier for you to spot allergens in packaged foods, especially “hidden” or less obvious ones. A food company may identify the presence of a major food allergen in the:^{1,11}

- **Ingredients list.** The allergen is identified by its common name in the ingredients list, such as milk, egg, or soy.
- **Ingredients list in parentheses.** When the allergenic ingredient is in a less common form, it may be identified in parentheses. For example: whey (milk), albumin (egg), and durum flour (wheat).
- **“Contains” statement.** The allergen can be listed after the word “Contains” in a separate statement near the ingredients list. For example, you might see “Contains: wheat, soy.”

You may also see precautionary warnings that a food allergen might be present due to cross-contact, such as during processing, transport, or storage of food. This could be worded as, “May contain ...” or “Manufactured in a facility that processes ...” on labels.¹² Most allergists advise avoiding the food if you’re allergic to the ingredients in these precautionary statements.¹¹

You should also be careful with imported foods. For example, in the United States, imported items are supposed to follow domestic food labeling laws, but occasionally they don’t.¹¹ When in doubt, contact the company first.

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