

MSG Ingredients in Food

Monosodium glutamate (MSG), also known as sodium glutamate, is used in cooking to intensify the flavor of food. It is used in a wide variety of food preparations. While controversial, some people appear to be sensitive to MSG and develop headaches or other symptoms after consuming the ingredient.¹

Some individuals may react to very small amounts of MSG. Reactions induced by MSG may occur immediately after ingestion or hours later. MSG-sensitive people typically do not react to protein (which contains bound glutamic acid) or any of the tiny amounts of free glutamic acid that might be found naturally in food.²

The lists below show two categories of food ingredients to avoid, based on the degree of MSG sensitivity. The first list includes food ingredients that contain MSG and are most often associated with adverse reactions. The second list identifies ingredients that may contain MSG and might need to be avoided by those who are highly sensitive.

Ingredients MSG-sensitive people should avoid:	Additional Ingredients highly sensitive people should avoid:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autolyzed yeast • Calcium caseinate • “Enzyme modified” • “Fermented” • Glutamate • Glutamic acid • Gelatin • Hydrolyzed protein • Hydrolyzed corn gluten • Monopotassium glutamate • Monosodium glutamate • Natrium glutamate • Protease enzymes • “Protein fortified” • Sodium caseinate • Soy protein • Soy protein isolate or concentrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrageenan • Citric acid • Barley malt • Bouillon and broth • Flavors(s) and flavoring(s) • Maltodextrin • Malt extract or flavoring • Natural pork/chicken/beef flavoring • Natural flavor(s) and flavoring(s) • “Pasteurized” • Pectin • Seasonings • Stock

More Information About MSG

- Reported reactions to MSG include: headaches, muscle aches, chest pain, flushing, sweating, and more.¹
- Foods that contain disodium guanylate and disodium inosinate often contain MSG.
- MSG reactions have been reported with the use of soaps, shampoos, hair conditioners, and cosmetics.
- Low-fat and no-fat milk products often include milk solids that contain MSG.
- Drinks, candy, and chewing gum are potential sources of MSG.
- Food fillers and binders may contain MSG.
- Certain supplements, such as medical food powders, may contain MSG.
- Some vaccines contain MSG as a stabilizer.³

REFERENCES

1. U.S. National Library of Medicine, Medline Plus. MSG symptom complex. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001126.htm>. Updated October 2018. Accessed October 2, 2020.
2. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Questions and answers on monosodium glutamate (MSG). <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-additives-petitions/questions-and-answers-monosodium-glutamate-msg>. Updated January 2018. Accessed October 2, 2020.
3. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Common ingredients in U.S. licensed vaccines. <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/safety-availability-biologics/common-ingredients-us-licensed-vaccines>. Updated April 2018. Accessed October 2, 2020.

