



Fact Sheet

Reading Labels for Food Allergens

Ingredients of food products are listed in descending order by weight. The ingredient list can be used to check for food allergens.

Food labels identify food allergens in one of three ways:

1. The name of the food source is listed in parentheses after the common name of the food allergen such as whey (milk).
2. The label may say “contains” which is followed by the name of the food source from which the major food allergen is derived, such as “contains wheat, milk and soy.”
3. Products labeled before January 1, 2006, may not give the common food allergen names or include a “contains” statement. Read the entire ingredient label thoroughly to determine presence of allergens.

Some foods contain hidden sources of allergens.

Milk and Dairy Products

- Tuna - may contain casein, a milk protein
- Nondairy products - may contain milk derivatives
- Meats - may contain the binding agent, casein, a milk protein
- Medicines - some medicines such as Benadryl®, contain the filler, lactose, a milk derivative

Eggs

- Egg substitutes - some contain egg whites
- Pasta - some processed cooked pastas contain eggs or have been processed on equipment used to produce egg-containing pastas

Peanuts

- Artificial nuts - some are peanut-based with flavoring to make them taste like other nuts
- Arachis oil - another name for peanut oil





Fact Sheet

Reading Labels for Food Allergens, continued

- Chocolate candy - may have been produced on equipment used to process peanuts or peanut-containing foods and cross-contact occurs
- Cultural foods - many Chinese, Indonesian, Mexican, Thai, or African foods contain peanuts or are exposed to peanuts
- Sunflower seeds - many are manufactured on equipment used to produce peanuts
- Nut butters - may have been processed on the same equipment used to make peanut butter

Tree nuts

- Flavorings - artificial and natural flavorings may contain tree nuts
- Other foods - tree nuts may be used in foods, such as cereals, crackers, ice cream, and barbecue sauce

Fish or shellfish

- Caesar salad - anchovies are often used as an ingredient
- Meat sauces - Worcestershire sauce and steak sauce may contain anchovies
- Imitation crabmeat - contains fish

Soy

- Peanut butter - may contain soy
- Other food products - soy may be found in canned tuna, crackers, cereals, sauces, soups, and infant formula

Wheat

- Imitation meat and seafood products - wheat flour may be flavored and shaped to resemble shrimp, beef, or pork
- Ice cream - may contain wheat
- Hot dogs - wheat is an ingredient in some brands
- Imitation crabmeat - some types contain wheat

References

Mayo Clinic. (2007). *Hidden sources of food allergens*. Retrieved November 17, 2008, from www.mayoclinic.com/print/food-allergies

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. (2006). *Information for consumers: Food allergen labeling and consumer protection act of 2004 questions and answers*. Retrieved November 17, 2008, from www.cfsan.fda.gov

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