

February 2025

What are the major food allergens?

As of Jan. 1, 2023, the nine major food allergens recognized in the United States are milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, and sesame.

What is the allergen labeling requirement?

The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (FALCPA) and Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act of 2021 require that food labels clearly identify the food source names of any ingredients that are one of the nine major food allergens or contain protein derived from a major food allergen.

How are the major food allergens listed on food labels?

They are listed using the common or usual name of ingredient (e.g., buttermilk) which identifies the allergen's food source name (i.e., milk). Otherwise, the allergen's food source name must be declared either 1) in parentheses following the name of the ingredient in the ingredient list (**example: "flour (wheat)"**) or 2) immediately after or next to the list of ingredients in a "contains" statement (**example: "contains wheat"**).

What is an allergic reaction?

An allergic reaction occurs when a person's immune system reacts to a substance inside of the body that their body has identified as harmful.

What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction?

Symptoms of an allergic reaction (also known as food allergies) can include hives, tingly or itchy sensation in the mouth, abdominal cramps, difficulty breathing, vomiting and/or diarrhea, and swelling of the face, tongue, lip, throat, and/or vocal cords. Symptoms are not always present, are not the same for every person, and can depend on various factors including the amount of food allergen consumed.

Fast Facts

- Before sesame was added in 2023, there had not been any updates to major food allergens since 2004
- An allergic reaction can happen within seconds to minutes of exposure to an allergen
- There is a difference between food intolerances and food allergens
- Consumers must be notified of the presence of major food allergens by written notification