

Food Allergies

Food allergies affect millions of Americans each and every day. While some symptoms can be minor, other symptoms can cause life threatening reactions. There is no cure for food allergies, however, with strict regulation and avoidance, food allergies can be controlled.

What are the Major Food Allergens?

Top 8

1. **Milk**
2. **Eggs**
3. **Fish** (e.g., bass, flounder, cod)
4. **Shellfish** (e.g., crab, lobster, shrimp)
5. **Tree Nuts** (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans)
6. **Peanuts**
7. **Wheat**
8. **Soybean**

These 8 allergens account for 90 percent of food allergic reactions. They also include any ingredient that contains protein derived from one or more of these allergens

What's the Severity?

After someone with an allergen ingests a food with the associated allergen, they can experience a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis that can lead to:

- constricted airways in the lungs
- severe lowering of blood pressure and shock ("anaphylactic shock")
- suffocation by swelling of the throat

Each year in the U.S., it is estimated that anaphylaxis to food results in:

- 30,000 emergency room visits
- 2,000 hospitalizations
- 150 deaths

It is important to administer epinephrine via Epi-pen during the early symptoms of anaphylaxis to help prevent any serious consequences

How Major Food Allergens are Listed

Food labels are required to identify the food source names of all major food allergens used to make the food. This requirement is met if the common or usual name of an ingredient (e.g., buttermilk) that is a major food allergen already identifies that allergen's food source name (i.e., milk). Otherwise, allergens must be listed in one of two ways:

1. **In parentheses** following the name of the ingredient
 - a. **example: "lecithin (soy)," "flour (wheat)"**
2. **Immediately after** or next to the list of ingredients in a "contains" statement
 - a. **example: "Contains Wheat, Milk, and Soy"**

Know the Symptoms

Symptoms related to food allergies can appear anywhere from a few minutes to two hours after a person has eaten the food in which they are allergic to. These symptoms can include:

- Hives
- Flushed skin or rash
- Tingling or itchy sensation in the mouth
- Face, tongue, or lip swelling
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Coughing or wheezing
- Dizziness and/or lightheadedness
- Swelling of the throat and vocal cords
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of consciousness