

# HOW TO READ A FOOD LABEL

Avoid food and non-food items that have advisory statements on labeling such as “may contain...” or “made/manufactured on equipment” or “in a facility that processes...”

## How to Read a Label for a Milk-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain milk as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the word “milk” on the product label.

### Avoid foods that contain milk or any of these ingredients:

- butter, butter fat, butter oil, butter acid, butter ester(s)
- buttermilk
- casein
- casein hydrolysate
- caseinates (*in all forms*)
- cheese
- cottage cheese
- cream
- curds
- custard
- diacetyl
- ghee
- half-and-half
- lactalbumin, lactalbumin phosphate
- lactoferrin
- lactose
- lactulose
- milk (*in all forms, including condensed, derivative, dry, evaporated, goat’s milk and milk from other animals, low fat, malted, milkfat, nonfat, powder, protein, skimmed, solids, whole*)
- milk protein hydrolysate
- pudding
- Recaldent®
- rennet casein
- sour cream, sour cream solids
- sour milk solids
- tagatose
- whey (*in all forms*)
- whey protein hydrolysate
- yogurt

### Milk is sometimes found in the following:

- artificial butter flavor
- baked goods
- caramel candies
- chocolate
- lactic acid starter culture and other bacterial cultures
- luncheon meat, hot dogs, sausages
- margarine
- nisin
- nondairy products
- nougat

### Keep the following in mind:

- Individuals who are allergic to cow’s milk are often advised to also avoid milk from other domestic animals. For example, goat’s milk protein is similar to cow’s milk protein and may, therefore, cause a reaction in individuals who have a milk allergy.

## How to Read a Label for an Egg-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain egg as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the word “egg” on the product label.

### Avoid foods that contain eggs or any of these ingredients:

- albumin (*also spelled albumen*)
- egg (*dried, powdered, solids, white, yolk*)
- eggnog
- lysozyme
- mayonnaise
- meringue (*meringue powder*)
- ovalbumin
- surimi
- vitellin
- Words starting with “ovo” or “ova” (such as ovalbumin)

### Egg is sometimes found in the following:

- baked goods
- breaded foods
- drink foam (alcoholic, specialty coffee)
- candies
- canned soups
- casseroles
- cream fillings/custards
- lecithin
- macaroni
- marzipan
- marshmallows
- nougat
- pasta
- meatballs/meatloaf
- salad dressings

### Keep the following in mind:

- Individuals with egg allergy should also avoid eggs from duck, turkey, goose, quail, etc., as these are known to be cross-reactive with chicken egg.
- While the whites of an egg contain the allergenic proteins, patients with an egg allergy must avoid all eggs completely.

## How to Read a Label for a Soy-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain soy as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the word “soy” on the product label.

### Avoid foods that contain soy or any of these ingredients:

- edamame
- miso
- natto
- shoyu
- soy (*soy albumin, soy cheese, soy fiber, soy flour, soy grits, soy ice cream, soy milk, soy nuts, soy sprouts, soy yogurt*)
- soya
- soybean (*curd, granules*)
- soy protein (*concentrate, hydrolyzed, isolate*)
- shoyu
- soy sauce
- tamari
- tempeh
- textured vegetable protein (TVP)
- tofu

### Soy is sometimes found in the following:

- Asian cuisine
- vegetable broth
- vegetable gum
- vegetable starch

### Keep the following in mind:

- The FDA exempts highly refined soybean oil from being labeled as an allergen. Studies show most allergic individuals can safely eat soy oil that has been highly refined (**not** cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded soybean oil).
- Soy protein may be found in numerous products, such as breads, cookies, crackers, canned broth and soups, canned tuna and meat, breakfast cereals, high-protein energy bars and snacks, low-fat peanut butters, and processed meats.
- Most individuals allergic to soy can safely eat soy lecithin.
- Follow your doctor’s advice regarding these ingredients.

## How to Read a Label for a Peanut-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain peanut as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the word "peanut" on the product label.

### Avoid foods that contain peanuts or any of these ingredients:

- artificial nuts
- beer nuts
- cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil
- goobers
- ground nuts
- mixed nuts
- monkey nuts
- nut meat
- nut pieces
- peanut butter
- peanut flour
- peanut protein hydrolysate

### Peanut is sometimes found in the following:

- African, Asian (*especially Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese*), and Mexican dishes
- baked goods (*i.e., pastries, cookies*)
- candy (*including chocolate candy*)
- chili
- egg rolls
- enchilada sauce
- marzipan
- mole sauce
- nougat

### Keep the following in mind:

- The FDA exempts highly refined peanut oil from being labeled as an allergen. Studies show that most allergic individuals can safely eat peanut oil that has been highly refined (not cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil). Follow your doctor's advice.
- A study showed that unlike other legumes, there is a strong possibility of cross-reaction between peanuts and lupine (or lupin). Flour derived from lupine is becoming a common substitute for gluten-containing flours. The law requires that a food product's ingredients must be listed on the label such as "lupin" or "lupine."
- Mandelonas are peanuts soaked in almond flavoring.
- Arachis oil is peanut oil.
- Many experts advise patients allergic to peanuts to avoid tree nuts as well.
- Sunflower seeds are often produced on equipment shared with peanuts.
- Some alternative nut butters, such as soy nut butter or sunflower seed butter, are produced on equipment shared with other tree nuts and, in some cases, peanuts. Contact the manufacturer before eating these products.

## How to Read a Label for a Wheat-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain wheat as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the word "wheat" on the product label. The law defines any species in the genus *Triticum* as wheat.

### Avoid foods that contain wheat or any of these ingredients:

- bread crumbs
- bulgur
- cereal extract
- club wheat
- couscous
- cracker meal
- durum
- einkorn
- emmer
- farina
- farro
- flour (*all purpose, bread, cake, durum, enriched, graham, high gluten, high protein, instant, pastry, self-rising, soft wheat, steel ground, stone ground, whole wheat*)
- freekah
- hydrolyzed wheat protein
- Kamut
- matzoh, matzoh meal (*also spelled as matzo, matzah, or matza*)
- pasta
- seitan
- semolina
- spelt
- sprouted wheat
- triticale
- vital wheat gluten
- wheat (*bran, durum, germ, gluten, grass, malt, sprouts, starch*)
- wheat bran hydrolysate
- wheat germ oil
- wheat grass
- wheat protein isolate
- whole wheat berries

### Wheat is sometimes found in the following:

- glucose syrup
- oats
- soy sauce
- starch (*gelatinized starch, modified starch, modified food starch, vegetable starch*)
- surimi

## How to Read a Label for a Shellfish-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain a crustacean shellfish as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the specific crustacean shellfish on the product label.

### Avoid foods that contain shellfish or any of these ingredients:

- barnacle
- crab
- crawfish (*crawdad, crayfish, ecrevisse*)
- krill
- lobster (*langouste, langoustine, Moreton bay bugs, scampi, tomalley*)
- prawns
- shrimp (*crevette, scampi*)

Mollusks are not considered major allergens under food labeling laws and may not be fully disclosed on a product label.

### Your doctor may advise you to avoid mollusks or these ingredients:

- abalone
- clams (*cherrystone, geoduck, littleneck, pismo, quahog*)
- cockle
- cuttlefish
- limpet (*lapas, opihi*)
- mussels
- octopus
- oysters
- periwinkle
- scallops
- sea cucumber sea urchin
- snails (*escargot*)
- squid (*calamari*)
- whelk (*Turban shell*)

### Shellfish are sometimes found in the following:

- bouillabaisse
- cuttlefish ink
- fish stock
- glucosamine
- seafood flavoring (*i.e., crab or clam extract*)
- surimi

### Keep the following in mind:

- Any food served in a seafood restaurant may contain shellfish protein due to cross-contact.
- For some individuals, a reaction may occur from inhaling cooking vapors or from handling fish or shellfish.

## How to Read a Label for a Tree Nut-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain a tree nut as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the specific tree nut on the product label.

### Avoid foods that contain nuts or any of these ingredients:

- almond
- artificial nuts
- beechnut
- Brazil nut
- Butternut
- cashew
- chestnut
- chinquapin
- coconut
- filbert/hazelnut
- gianduja (a chocolate-nut mixture)
- ginkgo nut
- hickory nut
- litchi/lychee/lychee nut
- macadamia nut
- marzipan/almond paste
- Nangai nut
- natural nut extract (i.e., almond, walnut)
- nut butters (i.e., cashew butter)
- nut meal
- nut meat
- nut paste (i.e., almond paste)
- nut pieces
- pecan
- pesto
- pili nut
- pine nut (also referred to as Indian, pignoli, piñolia, pignon, piñon, and pinyon nut)
- pistachio
- praline
- shea nut
- walnut

### Tree nuts are sometimes found in the following:

- black walnut hull extract (flavoring)
- natural nut extract
- nut distillates/alcoholic extracts
- nut oils (i.e., walnut oil, almond oil)
- walnut hull extract (flavoring)

### Keep the following in mind:

- Mortadella may contain pistachios.
- Tree nut proteins may be found in cereals, crackers, cookies, candy, chocolates, energy bars, flavored coffee, frozen desserts, marinades, and barbecue sauces.
- Ethnic restaurants (i.e., Chinese, African, Indian, Thai, and Vietnamese), ice cream parlors, and bakeries are considered high-risk for people with tree nut allergy due to the common use of nuts and the possibility of cross-contact, even if you order a tree-nut-free item.
- Tree nut oils are sometimes used in lotions and soaps. lotions.
- There is no evidence that coconut oil and shea nut oil/butter are allergenic.
- Many experts advise patients allergic to tree nuts to avoid peanuts as well.
- Talk to your doctor if you find other nuts not listed
- Coconut, the seed of a drupaceous fruit, has typically not been restricted in the diets of people with tree nut allergy. However, in October of 2006, the FDA began identifying coconut as a tree nut. Medical literature documents a small number of allergic reactions to coconut; most occurred in people who were not allergic to other tree nuts. Ask your doctor if you need to avoid coconut.

## How to Read a Label for a Fish-Free Diet

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain fish as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the specific type of fish on the product label.

- More than half of all people who are allergic to one type of fish also are allergic to other fish, so allergists often advise their patients to avoid all fish.
- Finned fish and shellfish do not come from related families of foods, so being allergic to one does not mean that you will not be able to tolerate the other. Be sure to talk to your doctor about which kinds of fish you can eat and which to avoid.

### The term "fish" encompasses all species of finned fish, including (but not limited to):

- anchovies
- bass
- catfish
- cod
- flounder
- grouper
- haddock
- hake
- herring
- mahi mahi
- perch
- pike
- pollock
- salmon
- scrod
- sole
- snapper
- swordfish
- tilapia
- trout
- tuna
- fish fume
- Fish gelatin (kosher gelatin, marine gelatin)
- fish oil
- fish sauce
- imitation fish or shellfish
- isinglass
- lutefisk
- maw, maws (fish maw)
- fish stock
- fishmeal
- nuoc mam (Vietnamese name for fish sauce; beware of other ethnic names)
- pizza (anchovy topping)
- roe
- salad dressing
- seafood flavoring
- shark cartilage, fin
- sushi, sashimi
- surimi (artificial crabmeat also known as "sea legs" or "sea sticks")
- worcestershire sauce

### Keep in mind the following:

- Some sensitive individuals may react to aerosolized fish protein through cooking vapors.
- Seafood restaurants are considered high-risk due to the possibility of cross-contact, even if you do not order fish.
- Ethnic restaurants (i.e., Chinese, African, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese) are considered high-risk because of the common use of fish and fish ingredients and the possibility of cross-contact, even if you do not order fish.

## How to Read a Label for a Sesame-Free Diet

Sesame is not currently included in the list of major allergens that must be declared by food manufacturers as part of the Food Allergen Labeling Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA). The list below includes information about ingredients to avoid if you have a sesame allergy, including uncommon names for the ingredient.

### Avoid foods that contain sesame or any of these ingredients:

- Benne, benne seed, benniseed
- Gingelly, gingelly oil
- Gomasio (sesame salt)
- Halvah
- Sesame flour
- Sesame oil\*
- Sesame paste
- Sesame salt
- Sesame seed
- Sesamol
- Sesamum indicum
- Sesemolina
- Sim sim
- Tahini, Tahina, Tehina
- Til

\* Studies show that most individuals with specific food protein allergies can safely consume highly refined oils derived from the original food source (examples include highly refined peanut and soybean oil). Because sesame oil is not refined, it is recommended that it be avoided by individuals with sesame allergy.

Sesame may also be included and undeclared in ingredients such as flavors or spice blends. If you are unsure whether or not a product could contain sesame, you should call the manufacturer to ask about their ingredients and manufacturing practices. Because spice blend and flavoring recipes are generally considered proprietary information, it is advised to specifically inquire if sesame is used as an ingredient, rather than simply asking what ingredients are used in a flavoring or spice blend.

Sesame has been found as an ingredient in the food items listed below. Please note this list is not all inclusive. It does not imply that sesame is always present in these foods. It is intended to serve as a reminder to always be vigilant and ask questions about ingredients before eating a food that you have not prepared yourself.

### Examples of foods that may contain sesame include:

- Asian cuisine (sesame oil is commonly used in cooking)
- Baked goods (such as bagels, bread, breadsticks, hamburger buns and rolls)
- Bread crumbs
- Cereals (such as granola and muesli)
- Chips (such as bagel chips, pita chips and tortilla chips)
- Crackers (such as melba toast and sesame snap bars)
- Dipping sauces (such as baba ghanoush, hummus and tahini sauce)
- Dressings, gravies, marinades and sauces
- Ethnic foods such as flavored rice, noodles, risotto, shish kebabs, stews and stir fry
- Falafel
- Goma-dofu (Japanese dessert)
- Herbs and herbal drinks
- Margarine
- Pasteli (Greek dessert)
- Processed meats and sausages
- Protein and energy bars
- Snack foods (such as pretzels, candy, Halvah, Japanese snack mix and rice cakes)
- Soups
- Sushi
- Tempeh
- Turkish cake
- Vegetarian burgers

### Sesame may also be found in non-food items, including:

- Cosmetics (including soaps and creams)
- Medications
- Nutritional supplements
- Pet foods

In non-food items, the scientific name for sesame, *Sesamum indicum*, may be on the label.