



How to Read Labels to Avoid Food Allergens

US law requires that food labels clearly identify the source of ingredients derived from these eight major food allergens:

- **Milk**
- **Soybean (Soya)**
- **Wheat**
- **Egg**
- **Peanut**
- **Tree nut** – the specific tree nut must be identified
- **Fish** - the specific fish species must be identified
- **Crustacean shellfish** - the specific species must be identified (e.g. shrimp, lobster, crab).*

***Mollusks** (e.g. clams, oysters, scallops) are not considered “major allergens” under US law, therefore are not necessarily identified on the labels.

Read the Entire Label (not just the list of ingredients because allergen statements may appear elsewhere) each and every time you purchase an item

Ingredients:

- Read the entire ingredient list including any “contains” or advisory statements and look specifically for those ingredients you need to avoid.
- The law only applies to the eight foods/food groups that are considered the “major allergens.” If allergic to other foods (such as seeds, garlic or any others) you will need to call the manufacturer to know if ingredients labeled with non-specific terms such as “spice” or “natural flavoring” contain a food you are avoiding.

Unintentional ingredients and “May Contain” advisory statements:

- The unintentional presence of ingredients due to contamination or cross contact in processing is not required to be listed on the product label.
- Some manufacturers choose to use advisory labeling to address the issue of unintentional ingredients. Look for advisory labeling such as “may contain [allergen]” or “produced in a facility that also produces [allergen].”
- Beware: The words used may not reflect risk (for example, “in a facility” may not be safer than “may contain”). Avoid any product that contains an advisory statement for your allergen, regardless of the type of advisory statement used.
- As advisory labeling is voluntary, the absence of a advisory statement does not necessarily mean that there is no risk of cross contact with allergen.

A Sample Chicken Soup Label with an Advisory Statement:

The ingredient list in the sample chicken soup label includes milk. This product label also carries an advisory statement- although the ingredient list does not indicate the presence of egg or wheat, the advisory statement indicates that there is a risk of cross contact with egg or wheat; therefore, this product would not be considered safe for those with milk, egg or wheat allergy

Nutrition Facts	Amount/serving	%DV*	Amount/serving	%DV*
Serv. Size 1 cup (249g)	Total Fat 12g	18%	Sodium 940mg	39%
Servings About 2	Sat. Fat 6g	30%	Total Carb. 24g	8%
Calories 250	Polyunsat. Fat 1.5g		Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Fat Cal. 110	Monounsat. Fat 2.5g		Sugars 1g	
*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	Cholest. 60mg	20%	Protein 10g	20%
	Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0% • Calcium 6% • Iron 8%			

Ingredients: WATER, CHICKEN, RICE, MODIFIED CORN STARCH, CREAM (MILK), POTATO, CARROT, ONION, SPICES, SALT.

MAY CONTAIN EGG AND WHEAT



From: www.cofargroup.org

Kosher Pareve:

Although a product labeled OU Pareve or Kosher Pareve should not contain milk ingredients, the pareve certification is not a guarantee that the product is safe for those allergic to milk. Always read the label and call the manufacturer before assuming a product is safe.

Kosher Dairy:



The D following the circled U indicates that this product is considered a dairy food by kosher law and the product either contains a dairy ingredient, or the product does not contain a dairy ingredient but was made on equipment that also makes other products with dairy ingredients. This cracker is considered kosher dairy due to the potential for milk contamination in the product. This product and other Kosher Dairy products are not considered safe for those with milk allergy.

Ingredients: ENRICHED FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE [VITAMIN B1], RIBOFLAVIN [VITAMIN B2], FOLIC ACID), SOYBEAN OIL, SALT, PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED COTTONSEED OIL, BAKING SODA, MALTED BARLEY FLOUR, CALCIUM CARBONATE (SOURCE OF CALCIUM), YEAST.

MORE LABEL READING TIPS

Read the label each time: Ingredients change! Different brands of a product, such as bread, may have different ingredients.

Labeling laws DO NOT cover medications or cosmetics that could have food ingredients.

You may need to contact the manufacturer for more information about a product:

- To ask the manufacturer about cross contact risk.
- To find out if ambiguous terms (e.g., “spices”) could be the allergen you are avoiding if your allergen is not part of the labeling laws (e.g., sesame, garlic, etc, are not required to be on the label)
 - Manufacturers may be reluctant to reveal “secret ingredients”
 - Ask specific questions such as: “My child is allergic to sesame; do the “spices” contain sesame?” instead of saying “What spices are used?”

RESOURCES

-This program has additional information sheets that you may find helpful, particularly about avoiding specific allergens

-Explore additional educational materials, for example, from Food Allergy Research & Education (www.foodallergy.org)

© Consortium of Food Allergy Research NIAID Grant U19 AI 066738. Last updated: 1-14.

Disclaimer: These materials are not comprehensive and are meant to supplement a comprehensive care plan prescribed by a physician; treatment should not be based solely on its contents. The authors/sponsor are not responsible for adverse consequences associated with the use of these materials.