Food Allergy Essentials

Here’s a handy introduction to what to look for if you need to avoid any of the “big eight” allergens. You should also avoid items that say “may contains.” Read every label every time because manufacturers change production procedures over time and one manufacturer may have several facilities that differ.

Peanuts - Look at the Nutrition Facts label. If it contains any of the following words, then skip it...

- Peanuts
- Beer nuts
- Cold or expeller pressed peanut oil
- Nuts
- Peanut protein hydrolysate
- Goobers
- Nut oil
- Mixed, powdered, or ground nuts
- Beer nuts
- Monkey nuts
- Peanut or nut flour
- Peanut butter
- Arachis oil

According to the Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE), “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.”

If the label says “PEANUT” anywhere, do not buy or eat it.

Tree Nuts - The label is always a good place to start. The FDA requires manufacturers to list the specific tree nut on the product label when a product contains tree nuts. Here are the words to watch out for...

- Almonds
- Beechnuts
- Natural nut extract
- Brazil nut
- Butternut
- Nut butters (almond, cashew, etc)
- Cashew
- Chestnut
- Litchi/lichee/lychee nut
- Chinquapin nut
- Coconut
- Mortadella (may have pistachios in it)
- Ginko nut
- Hickory nut
- Filbert, a.k.a. hazelnut
- Macadamia nut
- Nangai nut
- Pine nut/Indian/pignoli/pignol/pignon/piñon/pinyon nut
- Pecan
- Pili nut
- Marzipan/almond paste
- Pistachio
- Praline
- Nut paste (almond, cashew, etc)
- Artificial nuts
- Walnut
- Gianduja (nut and chocolate mix)
- Pesto
- Shea nut
- Nut meat, pieces, or meal

FARE asserts, “There is no evidence that coconut oil and shea nut oil/butter are allergenic.”
Milk
Thanks to FDA regulations, the word “MILK” must appear on the label of any product that contains it. Avoid...
- Caisin
- Lactose
- Butter, butter fat, or butter oil
- Yogurt
- Ghee
- Butter acid or ester
- Sour cream
- Buttermilk
- Sour cream or sour milk solids
- Lactoferrin
- Pudding
- Casein hydrolysate
- Lactalbumin
- Diacetyl
- Milk protein hydrolysate
- Cream
- Cottage cheese
- Whey protein hydrolysate
- Rennet casein
- Curds
- Lactalbumin phosphate
- Tagatose whey
- Caseinates
- Lactulose milk (in all forms -- whole, malted, condensed, low-fat, evaporated, skim, dry, nonfat, derivative, goat’s milk and milk from other animals, powdered, milk protein, and milk solids)
- Half and half
- Custard
- Recaldent

Eggs
Again, the FDA requires all foods that contain eggs to have the word “EGG” on the product label. Steer clear of...
- Ovalbumin
- Eggnog
- Egg (including egg solids, dried egg, egg yolk or white, or powdered eggs)
- Surimi
- Lysozyme
- Meringue or meringue powder
- Mayonnaise
- Albumin/albumen
Remember this important information from FARE too, “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.”
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**Wheat**
Avoid all foods that contain wheat or wheat products. This includes...
- Spelt
- Wheat grass
- Matzoh (a.k.a. matzo, matza, and matzah) along with any matzoh meal
- Einkorn
- Bread crumbs
- Vital wheat gluten
- Couscous
- Matzoh meal
- Einkorn
- Bread crumbs
- Wheat protein isolate
- Durum
- Bulgur
- Wheat bran hydrolysate
- Pasta
- Emmer
- Whole wheat berries
- Farina
- Semolina
- Wheat (including malt, grass, bran, sprouted, germ, durum, starch, gluten, club, and sprouts)
- Triticale
- Cereal extract
- Hydrolyzed wheat protein
- Kamut
- Wheat germ oil
- Flour (including all-purpose, stone ground, enriched, bread, soft wheat, high gluten, whole wheat, cake, durum, high protein, self-rising, instant, pastry, steel ground, and graham)
- Cracker meal

Watch out for soy sauce, which can sometimes contain wheat!

**Soy**
According to FARE, “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).” Be on the lookout for...
- Tofu
- Miso
- Soybean curd or granules
- Edamame
- Shoyu
- Textured vegetable protein, a.k.a. TVP
- Tamari
- Natto
- Soy protein isolate, concentrate, or hydrolyzed
- Soya
- Tempeh
- Soy (in any of the following forms milk, yogurt, ice cream, flour, albumin, nuts, fiber, grits, sprouts, or cheese)
- Soy sauce

Soy can sometimes be hiding in vegetable broth and vegetable gum as well.
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Fish
Watching out for fish on any label is a great place to start. However, some foods hide fish where you might not expect it. Avoid...

- Caponata  
- Surimi  
- Imitation/artificial fish or shellfish  
- Bouillabaisse  
- Barbecue sauce  
- Caesar salad and dressing  
- Meatloaf  
- Worcestershire sauce

Shellfish
While the FDA requires manufacturers to list any specific crustacean shellfish that is present in a food on the food’s label, FARE has revealed that “Mollusks are not considered major allergens under food labeling laws and may not be fully disclosed on a product label.” Avoid foods with shellfish, including...

- Krill  
- Prawns  
- Lobster, including scampi, Moreton bay bugs, langouste, langoustine, tomaalley, and langouste  
- Shrimp (crevette or scampi too)  
- Barnacle crab crawlfish, including ecervisse, crawdad, and crayfish

It may also be wise to avoid the following items as well. Talk with your doctor to see if this list applies to you...

- Scallops  
- Oysters  
- Whelks (Turban shell)  
- Octopus  
- Cockles  
- Abalone clams, including pismo, cherrystone, quahog, geoduck, and littleneck  
- Cuttlefish  
- Squid (a.k.a calamari)  
- Snails, a.k.a escargot  
- Mollusks  
- Sea cucumber  
- Limpets (lapas, opihi)  
- Sea urchin  
- Periwinkles  
- Mussels

Fish stock and seafood flavoring are two common sources of hidden shellfish. Skip them too.