

FOOD ALLERGIES AND FOOD ALLERGENS: FOCUS ON SESAME

Available in English & Spanish

Fact Sheet
Publication date:
August 2021



Scan the code and subscribe to our newsletter!

Many Americans have food allergies and are affected by food allergens when a specific food is eaten. Food allergies occur when the body's immune system reacts to certain proteins in food. Food allergies are a growing food safety and public health concern. There is no cure for food allergies.

Some allergic reactions are very serious and can be life threatening.

The symptoms and severity of allergic reactions to food can be different between individuals and can also be different for one person over time.

Symptoms of food allergies usually appear from within a few minutes to a few hours after a person has eaten the food to which he/she is allergic. Symptoms of allergic reactions may include but are not limited to hives, rash, tingling or itchy sensation in the mouth, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing and/or loss of consciousness.

Early recognition of signs and symptoms and learning how to manage food allergies, including which foods to avoid, are important measures to prevent serious health consequences.

People with a known food allergy who begin experiencing any of these symptoms should stop eating the food immediately, evaluate the need to use emergency medication (such as epinephrine) and/or seek medical attention.

Quick recognition and treatment can prevent serious health problems or death. Avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction.

There are eight foods, that are known as major food allergens. These foods are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans. There are many more allergens, but these are the top eight with the 9th (sesame) coming soon.

Did you know there is now a proposed 9th major food allergen?



Close-up of a pile of freshly baked bagels sprinkled with sesame seeds.

The 9th allergen is SESAME. This will be added to the eight existing food allergens listed above. The first "Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act" of 2004 (FALCPA) was passed to recognize the "Big 8 major food allergens". On April 23rd, 2021, a law was passed with a different name- "The Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Law" to recognize the 9th allergen (sesame) and the enforcement will be effective on January 1, 2023.



Glazed salmon fillet with sesame close-up on a plate.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) enforces regulations requiring companies to list ingredients on packaged foods and beverages. When problems are found, the FDA works with companies to recall products and provide public notification to immediately alert consumers.

People with food allergies should carefully read labels, stay alert to consumer notifications, ask questions about food preparation when dining out and avoid eating the foods they are allergic to.

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Cooperative Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.

REFERENCES

- UF/IFAS Extension, Solutions for Your Life, Food allergies- [Food Allergies - UF/IFAS Extension: Solutions for Your Life \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/ifas-extension/solutions-for-your-life/food-allergies/)
- UF/IFAS Extension, Broward County, Family and Consumer Sciences/Information for Families and Consumers-[Information for Families and Consumers - UF/IFAS Extension \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/ifas-extension/broward-county/family-and-consumer-sciences/)
- Food and Drug Administration- [FDA Issues Draft Guidance for Industry on Voluntary Disclosure of Sesame When Added as Flavoring or Spice | FDA](https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/food-allergies)
- Food and Drug Administration -<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/food-allergies>