



FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004

**Placer County
Cooperative Extension Office**
11477 E Avenue
DeWitt Center
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 889-7350

**Nevada County
Cooperative Extension Office**
255 So. Auburn Street
Veteran's Memorial Hall
Grass Valley, CA 95945
(530) 273-4563

Web site:
<http://ceplacernevada.ucdavis.edu>

**For more information,
contact:**

Rosemary Carter
FSNEP Program
Representatives
(530) 889-7350

E-mail:
carter@ucdavis.edu

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Effective January 1, 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is requiring food labels to clearly state if food products contain any ingredients that contain protein derived from the eight major allergenic foods. As a result of the **Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (FALCPA)**, manufacturers are required to identify in plain English the presence of ingredients that contain protein derived from milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, or soybeans in the list of ingredients or to say "contains" followed by name of the source of the food allergen after or adjacent to the list of ingredients.

Why did Congress pass this Act?

Congress passed this act to make it easier for food allergic consumers and their caregivers to identify and avoid foods that contain major food allergens.

What is a "major food allergen?"

FALCPA identifies eight foods or food groups as the major food allergens. They are milk, eggs, fish (e.g. bass, flounder, cod), shellfish

(e.g. crab, lobster, shrimp), tree nuts (e.g. almonds, walnuts, pecans), peanuts, wheat, and soybeans.



How serious are food allergies?

It is estimated that 2% of adults and about 5% of infants and young children in the U.S. suffer from food allergies. Approximately 30,000 consumers require emergency room treatment and 150 Americans die each year because of allergic reactions to food.

After January 1, 2006, will I still find products on the supermarket shelf without the improved labeling?

Yes. FALCPA does not require food manufacturers or retailers to remove or re-label products from supermarket shelves that do not reflect the additional allergen labeling so long as the products were labeled before January 1, 2006. The FDA advises consumers with allergies to always read a product's ingredient statement in conjunction with any "contains" statement.

For more questions and answers on the FALCPA go to: www.cfsan.fda.gov

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8 Things You Should Know about Allergies

1. **How many people are allergic to foods?**
About 4% of the American population, or 11 million people, including 5 million children.
2. **How can you tell if your child has a food allergy?**
Symptoms include hives and eczema. Allergies can also hit the respiratory system (causing swelling of the tongue or throat, and making it difficult to breathe) and the gastrointestinal tract (abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea).
3. **Do peanut allergies vary in severity?**
Yes. According to Dr. Sampson, an allergist at New York City's Mt. Sinai Medical Center, 15% to 20% of allergic people are at risk for a life threatening reaction. Usually it is people with severe asthma.
4. **What other foods cause allergies?**
Milk, eggs, wheat, soy, and tree nuts are common; fish and shellfish allergies are most common among adults.
5. **Are food allergies treatable?**
No. You can only avoid the foods in question.
6. **Can you outgrow allergies?**
Allergies to milk, eggs, wheat, and soy often fall away between the ages of 3 and 10.
7. **How about peanut allergies?**
They tend to be more tenacious. Only about 1/5 of juvenile sufferers shed their allergies.
8. **Any cures on the horizon?**
Researchers are pursuing various treatments involving Chinese herbs and proteins, and a vaccine is in the works.



Reducing a Student's Exposure to an Allergenic Food in the School Setting



The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology believes that students' exposure to allergy-causing foods can be reduced within the school setting by taking the following precautions:

- ◆ Conduct a school-wide food allergy awareness program for the entire staff to ensure that everyone will know what to do if an accidental allergic reaction occurs.
- ◆ Consider the creation of an allergen-free classroom by establishing a few simple rules about what would be allowed for snacks or used in instruction and in arts and crafts activities.
- ◆ Discuss food allergies with classmates and inform them of the need for their tolerance and understanding.
- ◆ Inform the parents of the classmates about this health issue and seek their cooperation in reinforcing classroom food rules with their children.
- ◆ Know the technical names, the common names, and any synonyms of common food ingredients. Read labels carefully to avoid giving hidden ingredients to students at risk.
- ◆ Be aware of the potential for food cross-contamination while handling, preparing, and serving food. Even minute quantities of certain foods can be life threatening.
- ◆ Encourage all classmates to wash their hands before and after eating.
- ◆ Consider the designation of an allergen-free lunchroom table, closely supervised by the lunchroom monitor.
- ◆ Discourage the trading and sharing of foods, food utensils, and food containers. Wash tabletops and other surfaces; make sure that they are clean and free of any contaminating foods.
- ◆ Foods brought in for special events should be clearly identified. A complete list of ingredients should accompany non-commercial (unlabeled) foods.