

The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004

As food science grows increasingly complex, it can be harder to identify ingredients derived from common allergens like wheat or soy. In order to help American consumers identify allergens in foods quickly, Congress passed the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA). It requires eight major allergens to be called out on packaging when present in the food in any form: **milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy and wheat.**

References

Food Allergies

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/

Food Allergens

Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)

www.foodallergy.org

Gluten-free resources

National Foundation for Celiac Awareness

www.celiaccentral.org/education

WHEAT-FREE COOKING TIPS

Wheat flour substitutes require a longer baking process (10–20 minutes). Here are some tips for successful wheat-free baked goods:

Most wheat-free baked goods will crumble, so making foods in smaller sizes helps retain shape and body.

To thicken a recipe or to bind ingredients together, substitute for 1 tablespoon of wheat flour:

- ½ tablespoon cornstarch, potato starch or rice flour
- 1 tablespoon arrowroot or oatmeal
- 2 teaspoons quick-cooking tapioca

Baking without gluten is most successful using a blend of gluten-free flours, such as sorghum, potato and tapioca. Xanthan gum is an ingredient used in gluten-free baking to add body to dough.



StrongerTogether.coop is a consumer website developed by **National Co+op Grocers (NCG)** for our “virtual chain” of over 140 retail food co-ops, operating more than 190 storefronts, nationwide.

StrongerTogether.coop is a place for people to gather on their food journeys. It’s a place to find out more about what’s in your food, where it comes from, where to find great food, how to prepare it and a whole lot more.

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Food allergy solutions

are readily available at the co-op to help meet your unique dietary needs. Whether you have a serious allergy or are sensitive to an ingredient, we can help you discover delicious alternatives in our bulk, frozen, refrigerated and packaged grocery departments.

Food sensitivities and allergies

Food allergies can develop at any time, in anyone. Allergies are distinguished from food sensitivities in that they typically produce more severe reactions. Food allergy symptoms vary but can include hives, swelling, respiratory problems and even anaphylactic shock. If you have a strong reaction to something you've eaten, consult your health practitioner.

How do you know if you have food sensitivities? Symptoms can be physical and/or emotional. Examples of physical symptoms include migraine headaches, digestive disorders, chronic colds and extreme fatigue. Joint and muscle pain, and even autoimmune diseases may be caused by latent food sensitivities. Examples of emotional symptoms include mood swings, difficulty concentrating, anxiety and depression. With the help of a health practitioner, you can isolate food sensitivities by following an elimination diet.

Common food allergies and alternatives

Milk and dairy

A milk allergy is different from a lactose intolerance, in that it is a reaction to the milk proteins casein and whey. People with a dairy allergy must avoid foods that contain these proteins. Lactose intolerance is much more common, and generally presents itself as digestive disturbance caused by the sugar in milk, lactose. People with this intolerance need to limit or avoid dairy or take lactase supplements when they eat dairy products.

Milk and dairy alternatives. In addition to milk alternatives like soy, nut and grain milks, co-ops offer a number of refrigerated, frozen and packaged grocery products that are dairy-free, including yogurt and cheese alternatives and frozen desserts.

Eggs

When people have an allergy to eggs, it is specifically proteins in the egg white that are problematic. But as the yolk cannot effectively be separated, the whole egg must be avoided. All types of bird eggs, not just chicken eggs, can produce a reaction in sensitive individuals.

Egg alternatives. Firm tofu can be crumbled and sautéed to replace scrambled eggs, or chopped for an eggless egg salad; in baked goods, applesauce, yogurt, mashed banana, avocado or pumpkin can be used in place of eggs. In savory items, soy flour mixed with water, cooked oatmeal or chia seeds make acceptable substitutes.

Peanuts and tree nuts

Allergies to peanuts and tree nuts are different—those allergic to one may not be to the other. Peanuts, as ground nuts, have more in common with legumes (beans and peas) than they do with tree nuts. Allergies to peanuts tend to be strong and even trace amounts can cause severe reactions.

Nut alternatives. For nut butter replacements try butters made from seeds such as sunflower butter, hemp seed butter and sesame seed butter (tahini). Or avoid nuts altogether and make high-protein sandwich spreads from silken tofu or beans.

Fish and shellfish

Allergies to fish and shellfish are different; those allergic to fish may not be to shellfish and vice versa. Those allergic to one or more types of fish are usually cautioned to avoid all types of fish. Shellfish allergies tend to be very severe and although the primary allergens are shrimp, crab and lobster, all shellfish should be avoided by allergic individuals.

Soy

Soy allergies, though common, are generally mild, but can be severe. The challenge is that soy is used in an incredible variety of processed food products.

Soy alternatives. Substitute fresh lima beans for edamame (fresh soybeans). Dairy-free alternatives to soy milk include rice, almond and hemp milk. For soy sauce substitutes, try coconut-based amino acids. Seitan, a wheat-based product, makes a good vegetarian meat substitute in place of tofu or textured vegetable protein (TVP) but look for varieties without soy sauce added. There are also soy-free varieties of miso made from chickpeas or adzuki beans.



Wheat and gluten

Although gluten, the protein component of wheat, gets a lot of attention, many people are allergic to wheat itself. Sensitivity to gluten is even more common and although not a true allergy, it can cause many similar and uncomfortable symptoms. Celiac disease, a condition that can be diagnosed by blood test, is relatively rare. People with celiac disease are unable to digest gluten and must strictly avoid it.

Wheat alternatives. Most people diagnosed with a wheat allergy have reactions to common wheat or *Triticum sativum*. These people often find they can tolerate spelt (*Triticum turgidum*) or kamut. This is not true of people with gluten sensitivity or celiac disease, as these grains are not gluten-free. Breads, flours and pastas made from spelt and kamut are often available at co-ops and make an excellent substitute for wheat products. Other whole grain flours can be used including amaranth, barley, buckwheat, millet, oats, rice and rye.

Gluten-free wheat alternatives. There are a number of gluten-free packaged food items available at your co-op including ones that replace classic wheat-based items like pasta, cereal, cookies, baking mixes and crackers. Read packaging carefully and look for gluten-free labeling; even if an item doesn't list wheat as an ingredient, it may be cross-contaminated with gluten if it was processed in the same facility as wheat items. Gluten-free flour mixes are available, or you can make your own from brown or white rice, corn, tapioca, potato, garbanzo or sorghum flours. Most bean, seed and nut flours are also safe.