

# Reading allergy food labels

Information for patients & carers



Leeds children's  
hospital

caring about children



You have been given this information sheet because you or your child has been diagnosed with a food allergy. This leaflet outlines food labelling laws in the UK and describes the meaning of 'may contain'.

### Always read the ingredients list

All products that contain one of the following foods in the recipe must be emphasised on the ingredients label, either in **bold**, *italics* or underlined.

<b>milk</b>	<b>egg</b>	<b>wheat</b>
<b>soybeans (soya)</b>	<b>peanuts**</b>	<b>nuts **</b>
<b>sesame</b>	<b>fish</b>	<b>lupin</b>
<b>celery</b>	<b>mustard</b>	<b>sulphites</b>
<b>CEREALS CONTAINING GLUTEN</b>		
<b>molluscs – mussels, clams, squid</b>	<b>shellfish (scampi, prawns, lobster, crayfish)</b>	

### 'May contain'

Some companies use the term 'may contain' on their food labels. This means that even though an ingredient has not been deliberately included in the food, the manufacturer cannot be sure that the product doesn't accidentally contain small amounts of them. For example 'may contain traces of nuts' or 'may contain seeds'.

These warnings should always be taken seriously.

Some people with food allergies only eat food that has been prepared in an entirely allergen free environment. Many families do this successfully.

However so many foods are labelled 'may contain' that this can be very restrictive. Some families choose to manage 'may contain' products by carefully assessing the risk and following these rules.

### **Check the product every time**

Just because you have eaten a particular food in the past and not had an allergic reaction does not mean that the food will always be safe to eat. Recipes change and it may be the next batch that is contaminated

### **Don't eat 'may contain' products when you are unwell**

The amount of a food that is needed to eat to cause an allergic reaction is called the threshold. This varies, as does the severity of a reaction you may have to the same amount of the food. Things that can lower your threshold include strenuous exercise, drinking alcohol, being unwell for any reason or symptoms of asthma or hayfever. At these times it is advisable to avoid foods labelled 'may contain'.

### **Make sure that you are in a place where you can get help**

Make sure that you are in a place where an ambulance can be called and can arrive promptly. Some families choose to avoid all 'may contain' products outside the family home.

## **Beware of:**

### **Foods that aren't pre-packed**

Foods such as bakery items or food from a deli counter. These products may be wrapped but not labelled with the information you need.

### **Contamination**

Sometimes small amounts of the food you need to avoid may have come into contact with another food. For example, nuts and seeds falling off baked items or the same serving spoon being used for multiple products at a deli counter.

It is important to be careful of food self-service areas.

### **Eating out**

You may want to contact a restaurant in advance about your food allergy as well as speaking to the chef about your allergy whilst choosing your dishes from the menu.

Don't risk eating a food if you aren't sure it's suitable

## READING FOOD LABELS

**AVOID** if these ingredients appear on food labels

WHEAT	EGG	MILK	SOYA	NUTS
Wheat bran	Egg (all birds)	Milk (cow, goat, sheep)	Soya beans	Almond
Wheat germ	Dried egg	Milk powder	Bean curd	Brazil
Wheat binder	Yolk	Modified milk	Tofu	Cashew
Wheat flour	Egg white	UHT milk	TVP	Hazelnut
Wheat gluten	Egg powder	Evaporated or condensed milk	Soya milk	(filbert, cob nut)
Wheat starch	Egg protein	Cream (including artificial)	Soya cream	Peanut
Wheat thickener	Frozen egg	Milk solids	Soya cheese	(ground nut, ground peanut, earth nut, pinder, goober, monkey nut)
Wholemeal	Egg pasta	Non-fat milk solids	Soya yoghurt	Macadamia
Wholegrain	Meringue	Yoghurt	Soya oil	(Queensland nut, candle nut)
Wholewheat	Mayonnaise	Buttermilk	Soy sauce	Pecan (hickory nut)
Rusk	Egg albumin	Butter	Soya flour	Pistachio
Breadcrumbs	Egg lecithin (E322)	Low-fat spread	Soya protein isolate	Walnut
Semolina		Margarine	Soya binder	
		Ghee	Soya-based flavouring	Peanut or nut flour
		Cheese	Soya lecithin (E322)	Peanut or nut protein
Hydrolysed wheat protein	Globulin	Whey, whey solids, curd		Unrefined peanut oil
Vegetable protein	Ovoglobulin	Hydrolysed whey protein	Rice cheese	
Wheat germ oil	Ovalbumin	Hydrolysed whey sugar	Breadcrumbs	Arachis Hypogaea
Some raising agents (containing wheat starch)	Livetin	Casein, caseinates	Hydrolysed vegetable protein	Nutella chocolate spread
	Ovomucin	Lactoglobulin	Miso	
	Ovovitellin			
	Vitellin			
MSG (Monosodium Glutamate)				
Modified or Gelatinized Starch				

We recommend that you and your family refresh your skills on a regular basis; practice with your adrenaline auto-injector trainer. This could be done at the beginning of each school term.

**Remember** - Be prepared. Have the rescue medicines (antihistamine & adrenaline auto-injector) readily available at all times!

Make sure your friends and family know what to do to manage an allergic reaction.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:**

**Children's Allergy Nurses**

Telephone: **(0113) 392 2257**

Email: **[leedsth-tr.allergy@nhs.net](mailto:leedsth-tr.allergy@nhs.net)**

Webpage:

**[www.leedsth.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/childrens-allergy-service/](http://www.leedsth.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/childrens-allergy-service/)**

**Further Information:**

**Food Standards Agency – [www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-allergy-and-intolerance](http://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-allergy-and-intolerance)**

**Anaphylaxis Campaign – [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)**

**Allergy UK – [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)**



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