

Food Allergies List

Introduction

Food allergies occur when the immune system mistakenly identifies certain foods as harmful, triggering a range of symptoms from mild discomfort to life-threatening anaphylaxis. Understanding and identifying common and less typical allergens is essential in providing comprehensive patient care. This handout serves as a practical reference for healthcare practitioners in assessing potential dietary allergens and supporting safe dietary planning.

Common food allergens

These are the most prevalent and well-documented allergens, also known as the “Big 9” in the U.S.:

1. **Milk**
2. **Eggs**
3. **Fish** (e.g., bass, flounder, cod)
4. **Crustacean shellfish** (e.g., crab, lobster, shrimp)
5. **Tree nuts** (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans)
6. **Peanuts**
7. **Wheat**
8. **Soybeans**
9. **Sesame** (recognized as a major allergen in the U.S. since 2023)

Uncommon food allergens to be aware of

Though not among the “Big 9,” these foods can still provoke allergic responses and should be considered when symptoms are unexplained:

- Apples
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cinnamon
- Citrus fruits (e.g., lemons, oranges)
- Cocoa beans
- Coconut
- Coffee
- Strawberries
- Sugar
- Sunflower
- Turkey
- Vanilla
- Xanthan gum
- Red meat
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Flaxseed
- Garlic
- Gelatin
- Grapes
- Honey
- Kiwi
- Lamb
- Legumes (e.g., beans, peas)
- Lettuce
- Malt
- Mango
- Melons
- Mint
- Mushrooms
- Nightshades (e.g., tomatoes, potatoes, peppers)
- Nitrates/Nitrites (found in processed meats)
- Pork
- Pineapple
- Pumpkin
- Rice

Other food allergens

While rarer, some allergens arise due to environmental or processing factors, or overlap with other conditions:

- **Spices and additives:** Cinnamon, vanilla, food dyes, preservatives.
- **Fermented foods:** May trigger histamine responses or intolerance symptoms.
- **Cross-reactive foods:** Shared proteins between foods and environmental allergens (see below).
- **Hidden ingredients:** Present in sauces, processed foods, or international cuisines. Always review labels and ingredient lists with patients.

Clinical notes and considerations

- **Latex-food syndrome:** Patients with latex allergies may experience cross-reactions to bananas, avocados, kiwifruit, and chestnuts due to similar protein structures.
- **Pollen-Food Allergy Syndrome (PFAS):** Common in individuals allergic to pollens like birch or ragweed. Raw fruits, vegetables, or nuts may cause localized oral symptoms (e.g., itching, tingling, mild swelling).
- **Food intolerances vs. allergies:** Ensure clear differentiation. Intolerances (e.g., lactose intolerance) involve the digestive system, not the immune system.
- **Patient education:** Educate patients on reading food labels, recognizing early symptoms, and carrying emergency medications if prescribed (e.g., epinephrine auto-injectors).

Additional notes

Hoffmann-Sommergruber, K. (2021). Rare food allergens. *Allergologie Select*, 5(01), 29–32. <https://doi.org/10.5414/alx02135e>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2023). *Food allergies: The “Big 9”* | Food Safety and Inspection Service. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/food-allergies-big-9>