

What Are Major Food Allergens?

Although more than 160 foods can cause allergic reactions, current Federal law identifies these 9 as the most common allergenic foods, causing 90% of allergic reactions.

The law says these foods and any ingredient containing protein derived from them are **major food allergens** and must be listed on the labels of foods that contain them.



How Major Food Allergens Are Listed

The food source names of all **major food allergens** must be shown on the label. If the common or usual name of an ingredient, such as **buttermilk**, identifies the allergen, i.e., **milk**, the requirement is met.

If not, the allergen's food source name must be shown at least once on the label in one of two ways:

EXAMPLE 1

In parentheses following the name of the ingredient.

lecithin (soy)

flour (wheat)

whey (milk)

EXAMPLE 2

Immediately after or next to the list of ingredients in a “contains” statement.

Contains: Wheat, Milk, and Soy.

Some foods carry a voluntary “may contain” label statement (e.g. “May Contain Peanuts”) because there is a chance that a food allergen is present. FDA guidance says these statements should not be used as a substitute for following current good manufacturing practices, and must be truthful and not misleading.