



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

# Soy

*One of the ten priority  
food allergens*



## Allergic reactions

**Allergic reactions are severe adverse reactions that occur when the body's immune system overreacts to a particular allergen. These reactions may be caused by food, insect stings, latex, medications and other substances. In Canada, the ten priority food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachio nuts and walnuts), sesame seeds, milk, eggs, seafood (fish, crustaceans and shellfish), soy, wheat, sulphites (a food additive) and mustard.**

### **What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction?**

When someone comes in contact with an allergen, the symptoms of a reaction may develop quickly and rapidly progress from mild to severe. The most severe form of an allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis. Symptoms can include breathing difficulties, a drop in blood pressure or shock, which may result in loss of consciousness and even death. A person experiencing an allergic reaction may have any of the following symptoms:

- Flushed face, hives or a rash, red and itchy skin
- Swelling of the eyes, face, lips, throat and tongue
- Trouble breathing, speaking or swallowing
- Anxiety, distress, faintness, paleness, sense of doom, weakness
- Cramps, diarrhea, vomiting
- A drop in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, loss of consciousness

### **How are food allergies and severe allergic reactions treated?**

Currently there is no cure for food allergies. The only option for managing the risk is to completely avoid the specific allergen. Appropriate emergency treatment for anaphylaxis (a severe food allergy reaction) includes an injection of epinephrine, which is available in an auto-injector device. Epinephrine must be administered as soon as symptoms of a severe allergic reaction appear. The injection must be followed by further treatment and observation in a hospital emergency room. If your allergist has diagnosed you with a food allergy and prescribed Epinephrine, carry it with you all the time and know how to use it. Follow your allergist's advice on how to use an auto-injector device.

## **Frequently asked questions about soy allergies**

### **I have a soy allergy. How can I avoid a soy-related reaction?**

Avoid all food and products that contain soy or soy derivatives which contain soy protein. These include any product whose ingredient list warns it “may contain” or “may contain traces of” soy.

### **Can a soy allergy be outgrown?**

A soy allergy is most common in infants and typically develops around three months of age. While for most children, a soy allergy will disappear within a few years, a severe soy allergy can be a lifelong condition. Consult your allergist before reintroducing your child to soy products.

### **How can I determine if a product contains soy or soy derivatives?**

Always read the ingredient list carefully.

If soy is part of the product formulation, it must be declared in the list of ingredients or in a separate “contains:” statement immediately following the list of ingredients.

### **What do I do if I am not sure whether a product contains soy or soy derivatives?**

If you have a soy allergy, do not eat or use the product. Get ingredient information from the manufacturer.

### **Can I consume soy oil?**

People who are allergic to soy may not need to avoid soy oil. Soy oils on the market tend to be refined enough to remove all of the proteins that can trigger allergic reactions. However, you should consult your allergist before eating anything made with soy oils.

### **Does product size affect the likelihood of an allergic reaction?**

Product size does not affect the likelihood of a reaction; however, the same brand of product may be safe to consume for one product size but not another. This is because product formulation may vary between different product sizes of the same product.

*Most infants outgrow their soy allergy by the age of two. However, a severe soy allergy can last a lifetime.*

## Avoiding soy and soy derivatives

Make sure you read product labels carefully to avoid products that contain soy and soy derivatives. Given its high protein content and its value as an emulsifying and texturizing agent, soy is common in many processed foods. Avoid food and products that do not have an ingredient list and read labels every time you shop. Manufacturers may occasionally change their recipes or use different ingredients for varieties of the same brand.

### Other names for soy

In the past, some products have used other names for soy on their labels. These names are not permitted based on the enhanced labelling requirements for food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites, however, if you have a soy allergy and see one of the following in the list of ingredients on a product you should not eat it.

- Bean curd (dofu, kori-dofu, soybean curds, tofu)
- Edamame
- Kinako
- Natto
- Nimame
- Okara
- Soya, soja, soybean and soyabeans
- Yuba

*Make sure you read product labels carefully to avoid products that contain soy and soy derivatives. Avoid food and products that do not have an ingredient list and read labels every time you shop.*

## **Food and products that contain or often contain soy**

- Bean sprouts
- Bread crumbs, cereals and crackers
- Breaded foods
- Hydrolyzed plant protein (HPP), hydrolyzed soy protein (HSP) and hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP)
- Imitation dairy food
- Infant formula, follow-up formula, nutrition supplements for toddlers and children
- Meal replacements
- Meat products with fillers, for example, burgers and prepared ground meat products
- Mexican foods, for example, chili, taco fillings and tamales
- Miso
- Nutrition supplements
- Sauces, for example, soy, shoyu, tamari, teriyaki, Worcestershire
- Simulated fish and meat products, for example, surimi, imitation bacon bits, vegetarian burgers
- Stews, for example, in gravies
- Tempeh
- Vegetarian dishes

## **Other possible sources of soy**

- Baked goods and baking mixes
- Beverage mixes, for example, hot chocolate and lemonade
- Canned tuna and minced hams, for example, seasoned or mixed with other ingredients for flavour
- Chewing gum
- Cooking spray, margarine, vegetable shortening and vegetable oil
- Dressings, gravies and marinades
- Frozen desserts
- Lecithin
- Milled corn
- Meat products with fillers, for example, preprepared hamburger patties, hotdogs and cold cuts
- Seafood -based products and fish
- Seasoning and spices
- Snack foods, for example, soy nuts
- Soups, broths, soup mixes and stocks
- Soy pasta
- Spreads, dips, mayonnaise and peanut butter
- Thickening agents
- Mono-diglyceride
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG) (may contain hydrolyzed protein)

## **Non-food sources of soy**

- Cosmetics and soaps
- Craft materials
- Glycerine
- Milk substitutes for young animals
- Pet food
- Vitamins

*Note: These lists are not complete and may change. Food and food products purchased from other countries, through mail-order or the Internet, are not always produced using the same manufacturing and labelling standards as in Canada.*

## ***What can I do?***

### **Be informed**

See an allergist and educate yourself about food allergies. Contact your local allergy association for further information.

If you or anyone you know has food allergies or would like to receive information about food being recalled, sign up for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) free e-mail "Food Recalls and Allergy Alerts" notification service available at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca). When you sign up you will automatically receive food recall public warnings.

### **Before eating**

Allergists recommend that if you do not have your auto-injector device with you that you do not eat. If the label indicates that a product "contains:" or "may contain:" soy or soy derivatives, do not eat it. If you do not recognize an ingredient or there is no ingredient list available, avoid the product.

## ***Watch out for allergen cross contamination!***

Cross contamination is the transfer of an ingredient (food allergen) to a product that does not normally have that ingredient in it. Through cross contamination, a food that should not contain the allergen could become dangerous to eat for those who are allergic.

Cross contamination can happen:

- during food manufacturing through shared production and packaging equipment;
- at retail through shared equipment, e.g., cheese and deli meats sliced on the same slicer; and through bulk display of food products, e.g., bins of baked goods, bulk nuts; and
- during food preparation at home or in restaurants through equipment, utensils and hands.

## ***What is the Government of Canada doing about food allergens?***

The Government of Canada is committed to providing safe food to all Canadians. The CFIA and Health Canada work closely with municipal, provincial and territorial partners and industry to meet this goal.

The CFIA enforces Canada's labelling laws and works with associations, distributors, food manufacturers and importers to ensure complete and appropriate labelling of all foods. The CFIA recommends that food companies establish effective allergen controls to prevent the occurrence of undeclared allergens and cross-contamination. The CFIA has developed guidelines and tools to aid them in developing these controls. When the CFIA becomes aware of a potential serious hazard associated with a food, such as undeclared allergens, the food product is recalled from the marketplace and a public warning is issued. The CFIA has also published several advisories to industry and consumers regarding allergens in food.

Health Canada has worked with the medical community, consumer associations, and the food industry to enhance labelling regulations for priority allergens, gluten sources and sulphites in pre-packaged food sold in Canada. Health Canada has amended the Food and Drug Regulations to require that the most common food and food ingredients that cause life-threatening or severe allergic reactions are always identified by their common names on food labels, allowing consumers to easily recognize them.

More information on the regulations to enhance the labelling of food allergens, gluten sources and added sulphites can be found on the Health Canada website at:  
**[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/allergen/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/allergen/index-eng.php)**

If you come across a food that you think is improperly labelled, contact the CFIA and provide information about the product.

Report a food safety or labelling concern:

**[www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/reporte.shtml](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/reporte.shtml)**

## Where can I get more information?

For more information on:

- food allergies; and
- subscribing to the “Food Recalls and Allergy Alerts” e-mail notification service,

visit the CFIA Website at **[www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)**

or call **1-800-442-2342/TTY 1-800-465-7735**

(8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday to Friday).

For information on this and other Government of Canada programs and services call

- 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)
- TTY 1-800-465 7735

Below are some organizations that can provide additional allergy information:

- Allergy/Asthma Information Association  
**[www.aaia.ca/en/index.htm](http://www.aaia.ca/en/index.htm)**
- Anaphylaxis Canada **[www.anaphylaxis.ca](http://www.anaphylaxis.ca)**
- Association Québécoise Des Allergies Alimentaires  
**[www.aqaa.qc.ca](http://www.aqaa.qc.ca)** (French only)
- Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology  
**[www.csaci.ca](http://www.csaci.ca)** (English only)
- Health Canada **[www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)**

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