



MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN LABEL GUIDELINES

To protect public health and inform consumers, food labels are required to identify the Major Food Allergens used to make that food. Food allergens can cause severe allergic reactions, including death, in some people.

Use these guidelines to successfully label any Major Food Allergens present in your food products.

Rev. Feb 2025

The 9 Major Food Allergens and Their Labeling Requirements:



MILK

If the allergen milk is in the product, list the term "Milk" on the label. Do not use the term "Dairy" since it is not the name of the actual allergen.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Cream, Butter, Whey, Casein, Lactose, Cheese



EGGS

If the allergen egg is in the product, list the term "Egg" on the label.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Albumin, Dried egg solids, Globulin, Powdered eggs



WHEAT

If the allergen wheat is in the product, list the term "Wheat" on the label. Wheat includes the following grains: Durum, Club Wheat, Spelt, Semolina, Einkorn, Emmer, Kamut, Triticale.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Flours, Breads, Baked Goods



TREE NUTS

If any tree nut allergen is in the product, list the specific type of tree nut on the label. For example, if using pecans, list "Pecans" instead of "Tree Nut."

LIST OF FDA DEFINED TREE NUT ALLERGENS, UPDATED. 2025:
Almond, Brazil nut, Cashew, Filbert/Hazelnut, Macadamia nut/Bush nut, Pecan, Pine nut/Pinon nut, Pistachio, Walnut (Black, California, English, Japanese/Heartnut, Persian)



PEANUTS

If the allergen peanut is in the product, list the term "Peanut" or "Peanuts" on the label.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Peanut Butter, Peanut Flour, Mixed Nuts



SOYBEAN

If the allergen soybean is in the product, list the term "Soybean," "Soy," or "Soya" on the label.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Soy Lecithin, Tofu, Soy Sauce, Cooking Sprays



FISH

If any fish allergen is in the product, list the specific species of fish on the label. For example, if using salmon, list "Salmon" instead of "Fish."

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Salmon, Bass, Cod, Worcestershire Sauce



CRUSTACEAN SHELLFISH

If any Crustacean shellfish allergen is in the product, list the species of Crustacean shellfish on the label.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Crab, Lobster, Shrimp, Ingredients that contain protein derived from Crustacean shellfish



SESAME SEEDS

If the allergen sesame seed is in the product, list the term "Sesame Seeds" on the label.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS WITH THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGEN:
Tahini, Hummus, Toppings on Breads/Buns

Notes:

- Severe reactions including death can occur in people with peanut allergies.
- Sesame seeds are the most recent addition to the Major Food Allergen list.
- Molluscan shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels, scallops) are not FDA allergens.
- Coconut is no longer a Tree Nut FDA considers as a Major Food Allergen



Allergens are one of the leading causes of recalls in the United States.



Labeling errors accounted for over 70% of Major Food Allergen recalls with known causes.



Milk was the allergen most frequently involved in Major Food Allergen recalls.



Bakery products was the most common category of food involved in Major Food Allergen recalls.

Recalls Associated with Food Allergens and Gluten in FDA-Regulated Foods from Fiscal Years 2013 to 2019 by Girdhari M. Sharma: sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0362028X23067418?via%3Dihub



MAJOR FOOD ALLERGENS DECLARED ON THE LABEL

A scale from 1 OZ to 4 OZ with icons for Milk, Egg, Wheat, Soybean, Peanut, Tree Nut, Fish, Crustacean Shellfish, and Sesame Seed.

Major Food Allergens must be listed on Food Labels in one of the two following ways:

#1: List all the Major Food Allergens within the list of ingredients that are either in the food or are contained in ingredients of the packaged food.

Include the name of the Major Food Allergen in parenthesis following the common or usual name of the ingredient when the name of that allergen is not listed elsewhere in the ingredient statement.

EXAMPLE 1 Allergens are only highlighted for instructional purposes

Best Brownies Label

Ingredients: Enriched flour (**wheat** flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, and folic acid), Butter (Cream (**Milk**), salt), Sugar, **Eggs**, Chocolate Chips (Unsweetened Chocolate, Sugar, **Soy** Lecithin), **Walnuts**, Cocoa Powder, Baking Soda, Salt.

EXAMPLE 1 EXPLANATION

In this example, all the allergen containing ingredients, other than the butter ingredient include the name of the Major Food Allergen in the name of their respective common name ingredient (**wheat** flour, **eggs**, **soy** lecithin, and **walnuts**.)

Butter is made from cream that includes the Major Food Allergen, milk. The ingredient statement on the butter package may read: "Butter (cream, salt) Contains: **Milk**." By only adding the list of ingredients of "Butter (cream, salt)" to your label's list of ingredients, you miss identifying the milk allergen.

To include the milk allergen within your product label's ingredient statement, add the name of the allergen in parentheses (**milk**) following the name of the ingredient (cream) that includes the milk allergen, like this: Butter (cream (**milk**), salt).

OR

#2: List all the Major Food Allergens used in the packaged food immediately after or next to the list of ingredients in a "Contains" statement.

If you choose to use an **optional** Contains statement, it must include the names of all the Major Food Allergens used as ingredients in the food. A Contains statement must begin with the word 'Contains' with a capital 'C'.

EXAMPLE 2 Allergens are only highlighted for instructional purposes

Best Brownies Label

Ingredients: Enriched flour (**wheat** flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, and folic acid), Butter (Cream, salt), Sugar, **Eggs**, Chocolate Chips (Unsweetened Chocolate, Sugar, **Soy** Lecithin), **Walnuts**, Cocoa Powder, Baking Soda, Salt.

Contains: **Wheat, Milk, Eggs, Soy, Walnuts**

EXAMPLE 2 EXPLANATION

All the allergens included in the product are listed in the Contains statement. Although **milk**, found in the butter ingredient, is not named within the list of ingredients, **milk** is declared in the Contains statement, meeting labeling requirements.

For additional Labeling resources visit
 WSDA Packaging and Labeling:
agr.wa.gov/departments/food-safety/food-safety/food-processors/packaging-and-labeling

3 Steps to Ensure You Properly Declare Major Food Allergens on Your Label:

- Check the ingredient statement of each ingredient you use.
 - Make sure all allergens associated with each ingredient are carried over to your product label.
 - Check for changes in your ingredients' labels including whenever you change your supplier or change ingredient brands.

It's a good idea to check every time you bring in ingredients.
- Check to make sure your product label correctly lists all the major food allergens contained in your product.
 - Your finished product label needs to reflect any changes to your ingredients.
- Check to make sure your correct label is applied on the matching product container.



Advisory statements such as "May Contain allergen" or "Processed in a facility that contains allergen" are not required by law. These advisory statements must not take the place of good manufacturing practices or effective cleaning of shared equipment to prevent allergen cross contact in your products.