



FOODFACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Food Allergies

What You Need to Know

Each year, millions of Americans have allergic reactions to food. Although most food allergies cause relatively mild and minor symptoms, some food allergies can cause severe reactions, and may even be life-threatening. There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of food allergens — and early recognition and management of allergic reactions to food — are important measures to prevent serious health consequences.

FDA's Role:

Labeling

To help Americans avoid the health risks posed by food allergens, Congress passed the **Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004** (FALCPA). The law applies to all foods whose labeling is regulated by FDA, both domestic and imported. (FDA regulates the labeling of all foods, except for poultry, most meats, certain egg products, and most alcoholic beverages.)

- Before FALCPA, the labels of foods made from two or more ingredients were required to list all ingredients by their common or usual names. The names of some ingredients, however, do not clearly identify their food source.
- Now, the law requires that labels must clearly identify the food source names of all ingredients that are — or contain any protein derived from — the eight most common food allergens, which FALCPA defines as “major food allergens.”

As a result, food labels help allergic consumers to identify offending foods or ingredients so they can more easily avoid them.

About Foods Labeled Before January 1, 2006

FALCPA did not require relabeling of food products labeled before January 1, 2006, which were made with a major food allergen that did not identify its food source name in the ingredient list. Although it is unlikely that any of these foods are still on store shelves, always use special care to read the complete ingredient list on food labels when you go shopping.



What Are Major Food Allergens?

While more than 160 foods can cause allergic reactions in people with food allergies, the law identifies the eight most common allergenic foods. These foods account for 90 percent of food allergic reactions, and are the food sources from which many other ingredients are derived.

The eight foods identified by the law are:

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

These eight foods, and any ingredient that contains protein derived from one or more of them, are designated as “major food allergens” by FALCPA.

How Major Food Allergens Are Listed

The law requires that food labels identify the food source names of all major food allergens used to make the food. This requirement is met if the common or usual name of an ingredient (e.g., buttermilk) that is a major food allergen already identifies that allergen’s food source name (i.e., milk). Otherwise, the allergen’s food source name must be declared at least once on the food label in **one of two ways**.

The name of the food source of a major food allergen must appear:

1. **In parentheses** following the name of the ingredient.

Examples: “lecithin (soy),” “flour (wheat),” and “whey (milk)”

— OR —

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

Example: “Contains Wheat, Milk, and Soy.”

Food Allergies: *What to Do If Symptoms Occur*

The appearance of symptoms (see *Know the Symptoms* at right) after eating food may be a sign of a food allergy. The food(s) that caused these symptoms should be avoided, and the affected person, should contact a doctor or health care provider for appropriate testing and evaluation.

- Persons found to have a food allergy should be taught to **read labels** and **avoid the offending foods**. They should also be taught, in case of accidental ingestion, to **recognize the early symptoms** of an allergic reaction, and be properly educated on — and armed with — appropriate treatment measures.
- Persons with a known food allergy who begin experiencing symptoms while, or after, eating a food should **initiate treatment immediately**, and go to a **nearby emergency room** if symptoms progress.

The Hard Facts: Severe Food Allergies Can Be Life-Threatening

Following ingestion of a food allergen(s), a person with food allergies can experience a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction called **anaphylaxis**.

This can lead to:

- constricted airways in the lungs
- severe lowering of blood pressure and shock (“**anaphylactic shock**”)
- suffocation by swelling of the throat

Each year in the U.S., it is estimated that anaphylaxis to food results in:

- 30,000 emergency room visits
- 2,000 hospitalizations
- 150 deaths

Prompt administration of epinephrine by autoinjector (e.g., Epi-pen) during early symptoms of anaphylaxis may help prevent these serious consequences.

Know the Symptoms

Symptoms of food allergies typically appear from within a few minutes to two hours after a person has eaten the food to which he or she is allergic.

Allergic reactions can include:

- Hives
- Flushed skin or rash
- Tingling or itchy sensation in the mouth
- Face, tongue, or lip swelling
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Coughing or wheezing
- Dizziness and/or lightheadedness
- Swelling of the throat and vocal cords
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of consciousness

About Other Allergens

Persons may still be allergic to — and have serious reactions to — foods *other* than the eight foods identified by the law. So, always be sure to read the food label’s ingredient list carefully to avoid the food allergens in question.



Allergy Alert:

Mild Symptoms Can Become More Severe

Initially mild *symptoms* that occur after ingesting a food allergen are not always a measure of mild *severity*. In fact, if not treated promptly, these symptoms can become more serious in a very short amount of time, and could lead to **anaphylaxis**. See *The Hard Facts* at left.

Food Allergen “Advisory” Labeling

FALCPA’s labeling requirements do not apply to the potential or unintentional presence of major food allergens in foods resulting from “cross-contact” situations during manufacturing, e.g., because of shared equipment or processing lines. In the context of food allergens, “cross-contact” occurs when a residue or trace amount of an allergenic food becomes incorporated into another food not intended to contain it. FDA guidance for the food industry states that food allergen advisory statements, e.g., “may contain [allergen]” or “produced in a facility that also uses [allergen]” should not be used as a substitute for adhering to current good manufacturing practices and must be truthful and not misleading. FDA is considering ways to best manage the use of these types of statements by manufacturers to better inform consumers.

For more information on food allergies, visit

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/SelectedHealthTopics/ucm119075.html>



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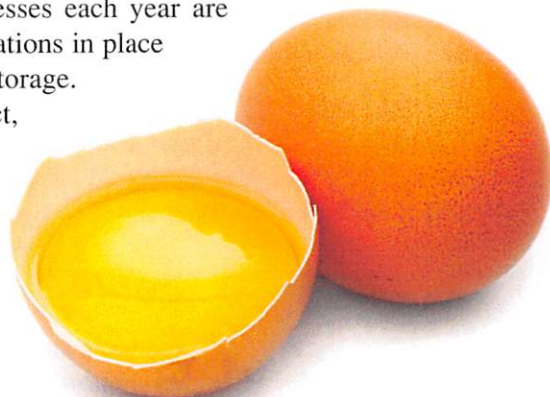
From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Playing it Safe With Eggs

What You Need to Know

Fresh eggs must be handled carefully to avoid the possibility of foodborne illness, often called “food poisoning.” Even eggs with clean, uncracked shells may occasionally contain bacteria called Salmonella that can cause an intestinal infection.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that 142,000 illnesses each year are caused by consuming eggs contaminated with *Salmonella*. FDA has put regulations in place to help prevent contamination of eggs on the farm and during shipping and storage. But consumers play a key role in preventing illness associated with eggs. In fact, the most effective way to prevent egg-related illness is by knowing how to buy, store, handle and cook eggs — or foods that contain them — safely. Follow these safe handling tips to help protect yourself and your family.



What is *Salmonella*?

Salmonella, the name of a group of bacteria, is the most common cause of food poisoning in the United States. *Salmonella* germs have been known to cause illness for over 100 years. They were discovered by an American scientist named Salmon, for whom they are named.

Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps, and vomiting 12 to 72 hours after infection. Symptoms usually last 4 to 7 days and most people get better without treatment. However, in some people, the diarrhea may be so severe that they need to be hospitalized. In these patients, the *Salmonella* infection may spread from the intestines to the blood stream, and then to other body sites and can cause death unless the person is treated quickly with antibiotics. Certain people are at greater risk for severe illness and include pregnant women, young children, older adults and people with weakened immune systems.

FDA requires all cartons of shell eggs that have not been treated to destroy *Salmonella* to carry the following safe handling statement:

Safe Handling Instructions

To prevent illness from bacteria: keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly

Eggs that have been treated to destroy *Salmonella* — by in-shell pasteurization, for example — are not required to carry safe handling instructions.

Buy Right

You can help keep eggs safe by making wise buying decisions at the grocery store.

- Buy eggs only if sold from a refrigerator or refrigerated case.
- Open the carton and make sure that the eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked.
- Refrigerate promptly.
- Store eggs in their original carton and use them within 3 weeks for best quality.

Keep Everything Clean

Before preparing any food, remember that cleanliness is key!

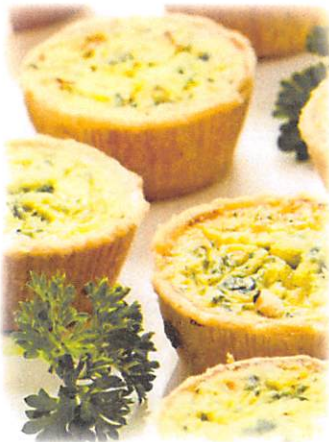
- Wash hands, utensils, equipment, and work surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after they come in contact with eggs and egg-containing foods.



Cook Thoroughly

Thorough cooking is perhaps the most important step in making sure eggs are safe.

- Cook eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm. Scrambled eggs should not be runny.
- Casseroles and other dishes containing eggs should be cooked to 160°F (72°C). Use a food thermometer to be sure.
- For recipes that call for eggs that are raw or undercooked when the dish is served — Caesar salad dressing and homemade ice cream are two examples — use either shell eggs that have been treated to destroy *Salmonella*, by pasteurization or another approved method, or pasteurized egg products. Treated shell eggs are available from a growing number of retailers and are clearly labeled, while pasteurized egg products are widely available.



Serve Safely

Bacteria can multiply in temperatures from 40°F (5°C) to 140°F (60°C), so it's very important to serve foods safely.

- Serve cooked eggs and egg-containing foods immediately after cooking.
- For buffet-style serving, hot egg dishes should be kept hot, and cold egg dishes kept cold.
- Eggs and egg dishes, such as quiches or soufflés, may be refrigerated for serving later but should be thoroughly reheated to 165°F (74°C) before serving.
- Cooked eggs, including hard-boiled eggs, and egg-containing foods, should not sit out for more than 2 hours. Within 2 hours either reheat or refrigerate.

Store Properly

- Use hard-cooked eggs (in the shell or peeled) within 1 week after cooking.
- Use frozen eggs within 1 year. Eggs should not be frozen in their shells. To freeze whole eggs, beat yolks and whites together. Egg whites can also be frozen by themselves.
- Refrigerate leftover cooked egg dishes and use within 3 to 4 days. When refrigerating a large amount of a hot egg-containing leftover, divide it into several shallow containers so it will cool quickly.

On the Road

- Cooked eggs for a picnic should be packed in an insulated cooler with enough ice or frozen gel packs to keep them cold.
- Don't put the cooler in the trunk — carry it in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of the car.
- If taking cooked eggs to work or school, pack them with a small frozen gel pack or a frozen juice box.





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Talking About Juice Safety

What You Need to Know

Juices provide many essential nutrients, but consuming untreated juices can pose health risks to your family.

The FDA has received reports of serious outbreaks of foodborne illness that have been traced to drinking fruit and vegetable juice and cider that has not been treated to kill harmful bacteria.

While most people's immune systems can usually fight off the effects of foodborne illness, children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems risk serious illnesses or even death from drinking untreated juices.



Warning Labels

Since 1999, the FDA has required juice manufacturers to place **warning information** on product containers about the health risks of drinking untreated juice or cider. Only a small portion of all fruit and vegetable juices sold in supermarkets *is not* treated to kill harmful bacteria. These products are required to carry the following warning label:

WARNING: This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.

You should note that the FDA *does not* require warning labels for juice or cider that is fresh-squeezed and sold by the glass, such as at apple orchards, at farm markets, at roadside stands, or in some juice bars. If you're unsure if a glass of juice or cider has been treated, be sure to ask.

2 Simple Steps to Juice Safety

When purchasing juice, take these two simple steps to protect your children.

1. Always Read the Label

Look for the warning label to avoid the purchase of untreated juices. You can find **pasteurized or otherwise treated products** in your grocers' refrigerated sections, frozen food cases, or in non-refrigerated containers, such as juice boxes, bottles, or cans. **Untreated juice** is most likely to be sold in the refrigerated section of a grocery store.

2. When in Doubt, Ask!

Always ask if you're unsure if a juice product is treated, especially for juices sold in refrigerated cases of grocery or health food stores, cider mills, or farm markets. Also, don't hesitate to ask if the labeling is unclear or if the juice or cider is sold by the glass.

Talking About Juice Safety (cont'd)

Foodborne Illness: *Be Aware of the Symptoms*

Consuming dangerous foodborne bacteria will usually cause illness within one to three days of eating the contaminated food. However, sickness can also occur within 20 minutes or up to six weeks later. In addition, sometimes foodborne illness is confused with other types of illness. Symptoms of foodborne illness usually include:

- vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain
- flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, and body ache

If you or your children experience these symptoms, see a health care professional who can properly diagnose foodborne illness, identify the specific bacteria involved, and prescribe the best treatment.



Everyone can practice safe food handling by following these four simple steps:

