



Soy

One of the nine most
common food allergens



Allergic reactions

Severe allergic reactions (e.g. anaphylactic reaction) occur when the body's immune system strongly reacts to a particular allergen protein or irritant. These reactions may be caused by food, insect stings and medications. In Canada, the nine priority food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, sesame seeds, milk, eggs, fish (including crustaceans and shellfish), soy, wheat and sulphites.

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 dangerous symptoms include breathing difficulties, a drop in blood pressure or shock, which may result in loss of consciousness and even death. Severe allergic reactions can occur quickly and without warning. 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
- Anxiousness, distress, faintness, paleness, sense of doom, weakness
- Cramps, diarrhea, vomiting
- A drop in blood pressure, rapid heart beat, loss of consciousness

How are food allergies and severe food allergy reactions treated?

Currently there is no cure for food allergies. The only option is complete avoidance of the specific allergen. Appropriate emergency treatment for a severe food allergy reaction includes an injection of epinephrine (adrenalin), which is available in an auto-injector, such as an EpiPen[®]. Adrenalin must be administered as soon as symptoms of a severe allergic reaction appear. The injection is 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 EpiPen[®].

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 and soy derivatives, including any product whose ingredient list warns it “may contain” soy.

Can a soy allergy be outgrown?

Soy allergies are most common in infants and usually develop at three months of age. Most infants outgrow their soy allergy by the age of two. However, a severe soy allergy can last a lifetime. Consult your allergist before reintroducing soy products.

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

Always read the ingredient list carefully. Soy and soy derivatives can often be present under different names, e.g., tofu. Do not forget that cross-contamination, e.g., using the same knife that was just used to cut tofu, can also be a potential source of the allergen.

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

If you are allergic to soy, do not eat or use the product. Get ingredient information from the manufacturer.

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Avoiding soy and soy derivatives

Make sure you read product labels carefully to avoid products that contain soy and soy derivatives. Always ask questions about food preparation, ingredients and the possibility of cross-contamination when eating out and buying food from retail food outlets, e.g., in-store bakeries, shopping centre food outlets. 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. Refer to the following list before shopping:

Other names for soy

Edamame
Miso
Mono-diglyceride
Natto
Okara
Soya, soja, soybean, soybeans
Soy protein (isolate/concentrate), vegetable protein
Tempeh
Textured soy flour (TSF), textured soy protein (TSP),
textured vegetable protein (TVP)
Tofu (soybean curds)
Yuba

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Possible sources of soy

Note: Avoid all food and products that contain soy in the ingredient list, e.g., soy cheese.

Baby formulas
Baked goods and baking mixes, e.g., breads, cookies, cake mixes, doughnuts, pancakes
Bean sprouts
Beverage mixes, e.g., hot chocolate, lemonade
Bread crumbs, cereals, crackers
Breaded foods, chili, pastas, stews, taco filling, tamales
Canned tuna/minced hams
Chewing gum
Cooking spray, margarine, vegetable shortening, vegetable oil
Cross contamination, e.g., containers, utensils
Diet drinks, imitation milk
Dressings, gravies, marinades
Frozen desserts
Hydrolyzed plant protein (HPP), hydrolyzed soy protein (HSP), hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP)
Lecithin
Monosodium glutamate (MSG) (may contain hydrolyzed protein)
Natural flavours, e.g., listed in ingredient lists may be soy derivatives
Processed and prepared meats, e.g., beef, deli, pork, poultry
Sauces, e.g., soy, shoyu, tamari, teriyaki, Worcestershire
Seafood-based products, fish
Seasoning, spices
Snack foods, e.g., candy, chocolate, energy bars, fudge, popcorn, potato chips
Soups, broths, soup mixes/stock
Spreads, dips, mayonnaise, peanut butter
Vegetarian dishes

Non-food sources of soy

Cosmetics, 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 "Allergy Alerts and Food Recalls" subscription service available at 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 EpiPen[®] with you, that you not eat. If an ingredient list says a product "may contain" or "does contain" soy or soy derivatives, do not eat. If you do not recognize an ingredient or there is no ingredient list available, avoid the product.

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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 minimize the potential for allergic reactions. 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 *Food and Drug Regulations* require that most pre-packaged foods carry a label and that their ingredients appear in a list in decreasing order of proportion. However, they do not currently require components (e.g. ingredients of ingredients) of certain foods and products, such as flavouring, seasoning, spices and vinegar, to be listed on food labels.

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

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Where can I get more information?

For more information on food allergies and to subscribe to the free "Allergy Alerts and Food Recalls" e-mail subscription service, contact the CFIA at **www.inspection.gc.ca** or **1 800 442-2342** (8:00 am to 4:00 pm local 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 of the organizations that can provide additional allergy information:

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

Developed in consultation with the Allergy/Asthma Information Association, Anaphylaxis Canada, Association Québécoise Des Allergies Alimentaires, the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and Health Canada.