



Eggs

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 egg allergies

I have an egg allergy. How can I avoid an egg-related reaction?

Avoid all food and products that contain egg and egg derivatives, including any product whose ingredient list warns it “may contain” egg.

Can an egg allergy be outgrown?

Studies show that most children outgrow their egg allergy by three years of age. However, a severe egg allergy can last a lifetime. Consult your allergist before reintroducing egg products.

Can a person who is allergic to raw eggs eat cooked eggs?

Usually not. While cooking can alter the protein of a raw egg, it may not be sufficient to prevent a reaction. Consult your allergist before experimenting.

Are flu and meningitis shots safe for someone with an egg allergy?

Influenza vaccines are grown on egg embryos and may contain a small amount of egg protein. Consult your allergist before getting a flu shot. Although the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine may contain egg protein, it is considered safe for children.

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

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

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

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

Avoiding egg and egg derivatives

Make sure you read product labels carefully to avoid products that contain egg and egg 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 eggs

Albumin/Albumen
Conalbumin
Egg substitutes, e.g., Egg Beaters®
Globulin
Livetin
Lysozyme
Meringue
Ovalbumin
Ovoglobulin
Ovolactohydrolyze proteins
Ovomacroglobulin
Ovomucin, ovomucoid
Ovotransferrin
Ovovitellin
Silico-albuminate
Simplese®
Vitellin



Possible sources of eggs

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

Alcoholic cocktails/drinks
Baby food
Baked goods and baking mixes, e.g., breads, cakes, cookies, doughnuts, muffins, pancakes, pastries
Battered/fried foods
Confectionary, e.g., candy, chocolate
Creamy dressings, salad dressings, spreads, e.g., mayonnaise
Cross-contamination, e.g., containers, food in deep fryers, utensils
Desserts, e.g., custard, dessert mixes, ice cream, pudding
Egg/fat substitutes
Fish mixtures, e.g., surimi (used to make imitation crab/lobster meat)
Foam/milk topping on coffee
Homemade root beer, malt drink mixes
Icing, glazes, e.g., egg wash on baked goods, nougat
Lecithin
Meat mixtures, e.g., hamburger, hot dogs, meatballs, meatloaf, salami, etc.
Orange Julep® (orange juice beverage)
Pasta, e.g., egg noodles
Quiche, soufflé
Sauces, e.g., béarnaise, hollandaise, newburg
Soups

Non-food sources of eggs

Anesthetic, e.g., Diprivan® (propofol)
Certain vaccines, e.g., MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella)
Craft materials
Hair care products
Medications

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" eggs or egg derivatives, do not eat. If you do not recognize an ingredient or there is no ingredient list available, avoid the product.

Allergists recommend that if you do not have your EpiPen® with you, that you not eat.



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.

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.

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.