Decoding Food Labels: Handouts for People with Food Allergies

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If you are allergic to egg protein, you should avoid any product with the word *egg* on the label. You should also avoid products with the following terms on their label:

- Albumin
- Binder
- Coagulant
- Emulsifier
- Globulin/
- Ovaglobulin
- Lecithin
- Livetin
- Lysozyme
- Ovalbumin
- Ovamucin
- Ovamucoid
- Ovovitellin
- Vitellin
- Simplesse*  

*Simplesse™ is a fat substitute made from egg white and milk protein.
Types of foods that likely contain egg protein include:

- Baked goods and packaged mixes
- Creamy fillings and sauces
- Breakfast cereals
- Malted drinks and mixes
- Pancakes and waffles
- Marzipan*
- Custard
- Marshmallows
- Processed meat products
- Pastas/egg noodles
- Salad dressings/mayonnaise
- Soups
- Meringue
- Pudding

* Marzipan might be made with egg whites

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.
Milk and milk proteins are also found in a variety of processed foods. Individuals with milk protein allergies should avoid all types of milk, ice cream, yogurt, and cheese, including vegetarian cheese. Allergic individuals should avoid foods with the terms butter, cream, casein, caseinate, whey, or emulsifier on the label.

Additional labeling terms indicating the presence of milk protein in a food include:

- Caramel color or flavoring
- High protein flavor
- Lactalbumin/lactalbumin phosphate
- Lactoglobulin
- Lactose
- Natural flavoring
- Solids
- Simplesse*

*Simplesse™ is a fat substitute made from egg white and milk protein
Types of foods that likely contain milk protein include:

- Battered foods
- Baked goods and packaged mixes.
- Breakfast cereals
- Chocolate
- Cream sauces, soups and mixes
- Gravies and mixes
- Ghee*
- Custard, puddings, sherbet
- Imitation sour cream
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Margarine
- Sausages
- Sweets/candies

* Ghee is clarified butter frequently used in Indian Cuisine.
Individuals who are allergic to wheat proteins should avoid any product that contains the term *wheat, bulgur, couscous, bran, gluten, breadcrumbs,* or *hydrolyzed wheat proteins* on the label. The presence of wheat protein in a food product may be indicated by the following label terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flour</th>
<th>MSG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornstarch</td>
<td>Vegetable starch/gum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farina</td>
<td>Gelatinized starch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semolina</td>
<td>Spelt*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triticale*</td>
<td>Kamut*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miso**</td>
<td>Modified food starch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malt</td>
<td>Hydrolyzed vegetable protein</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Spelt and Kamut are both relatives of wheat; Triticale is a wheat/rye hybrid. These grains are gaining popularity as wheat substitutes. Spelt, Kamut, and Triticale containing products are marketed primarily through health/natural food stores.

** Fermented soy product with up to 50% wheat.
Types of foods that likely contain wheat proteins include:

- Ale/beer/wine/bourbon/whiskey
- Baked goods and mixes (Including Barley Products)
- Battered or breaded foods
- Breakfast cereals
- Candy/chocolate
- Processed meats
- Coffee substitutes
- Gravy
- Ice cream and cones
- Malts and flavorings
- Pasta/egg noodles
- Soup and soup mixes
- Soy sauce
- Pretzels, chips, crackers
The presence of the following terms on the product label may also indicate the presence of soy protein:

- Carob
- Lecithin
- Miso*
- Protein
- Starch
- Bulking agent
- Vegetable broth/gum/starch
- Artificial and natural flavoring
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Textured vegetable protein (TVP)
- Hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP)/
- Hydrolyzed soy protein

* Miso is a paste made from fermented soybeans, used as a flavoring agent in Japanese Cuisine.
Types of foods that likely contain soy protein include:

- Baked goods
- Some breakfast cereals
- Hamburger patties
- Butter substitutes/shortening
- Chocolates/candy
- Canned meat/fish in sauces
- Canned/packaged soups
- Canned tuna
- Crackers
- Gravies/mixes
- Oriental foods
- Processed meats
- Ice cream
- Liquid/powdered meal replacers
- Seasoning sauces
- Seasoned salt
- Snack bars
- Bouillon cubes
- TV dinners
- Tamari*

* Tamari is a dark sauce, similar to but thicker than soy sauce
The terms peanut, peanut butter, ground-nut, flavoring, extract, and oriental sauce on a product label generally indicates the presence of peanut protein.

Types of food that may contain peanut protein include:

Baked goods/mixes
Battered foods
Some breakfast cereals
Cereal-based products
Candy, candy bars/sweets (read label)
Ice Cream
Margarine/vegetable oil/vegetable fat
Some grain breads
Snack foods
Barbecue/Worcestershire sauce
Sunflower seeds*

* Sunflower seeds may be processed on equipment shared with peanuts.

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Other types of foods that may contain peanut protein include:

Chili  
Soups  
Marzipan* *  
Satay sauce***  
Milk formula  
Chinese dishes/egg roll  
Asian dishes (e.g. Thai/Indonesian)  
African dishes  
Energy bars  
Meat substitutions

** Marzipan is a paste made of almond and sugar, used on pastry or molded into candy. Marzipan might be made with egg white as well.

*** Satay sauce is made with peanuts or peanut butter and soy sauce. It might also be made with other allergic ingredients such as shrimp paste or fish sauce.
Seafood refers to fish and shellfish. Fish is one of the most common causes of food allergic reaction in both adult and children. Certain species of fish contain high levels of histidine (an amino acid), which can be converted into histamine by bacteria following improper temperature management. Reactions to histamine can mimic allergic reactions, but are not indicative of a true allergy.

Types of foods that might contain fish/seafood proteins include:

- Worcestershire/Steak sauce
- Hot dogs/bologna/ham
- Pizza toppings
- Fish sauce
- Shrimp paste
- Fermented oyster sauce
Other types of foods that might contain fish/seafood proteins include:

Surimi*
Caponata**
Marinara sauce
Vitamin supplements (read label)
Curry paste
Chitin or Chitosan***
Fermented fish stomach

* Surimi is a fish protein (most commonly made from Pollack), marketed as imitation seafood. Surimi may contain artificial flavor, sweeteners, egg white, starch, and small amounts of real shellfish.
** Caponata is an eggplant relish that can contain anchovies.
*** Chitin or Chitosan is a chemical compounds (polysaccharide) derived from crab or shrimp shells. It is wildly used in foods and other products as coating agent, bulking agents, or antimicrobial agent. It is often used as one of materials for making capsules or other drug delivery system.
Shellfish tends to be a more potent allergen among adults. Shellfish include Mollusk (e.g. squid, octopus, clams, and scallop) and Crustacean (e.g. crab, lobster, crawfish, and shrimp). Shellfish may be listed in seafood category of foods. Although shellfish might be incorporated into a variety of foods during processing, the product’s label generally states this clearly.

Types of foods that might shellfish proteins include:

- Worcestershire
- Steak sauce
- Caesar salad dressing
- Hot dogs/bologna/ham
- Pizza toppings
- Fish sauce
- Fish stock
- Shrimp paste
- Fermented oyster sauce
- Surimi*
- Caponata**
- Marinara sauce
- Vitamin supplements (read label)
- Curry paste
- Chitin or Chitosan***
- Fermented fish stomach

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