



# Eggs

One of the nine most  
common food allergens



**Allergic reactions are severe adverse reactions that occur when the body's immune system overreacts to a particular allergen. These reactions may be caused by food, insect stings, latex, medications and other substances. In Canada, the nine priority food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, sesame seeds, milk, eggs, seafood (fish, crustaceans and shellfish), soy, wheat and sulphites (a food additive).**

## 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 severe form of an allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis. Symptoms can include breathing difficulties, a drop in blood pressure or shock, which may result in loss of consciousness and even death. 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
- Anxiety, 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 allergic reactions treated?

Currently there is no cure for food allergies. The only option is complete avoidance of the specific allergen. Appropriate emergency treatment for anaphylaxis (a severe food allergy reaction) includes an injection of adrenaline, which is available in an auto-injector device. Adrenaline must be administered as soon as symptoms of a severe allergic reaction appear. The injection must be followed by further treatment and observation in a hospital emergency room. If your allergist has diagnosed you with a food allergy and prescribed adrenaline, carry it with you all the time and know how to use it. Follow your allergist's advice on how to use an auto-injector device.

## 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. These include any product whose ingredient list warns it “may contain” or “may contain traces of” 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 MMR 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. For other common ingredient label names, refer to the list below.

### **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.

### **Does product size affect the likelihood of an allergic reaction?**

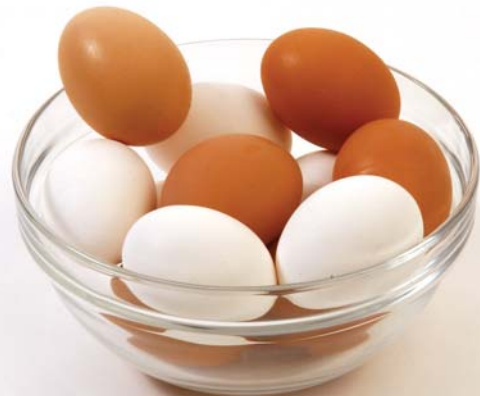
It does not affect the likelihood of a reaction; however, the same brand of product may be safe to consume for one product size but not another. This is because product formulation may vary between different product sizes of the same product.

## Avoiding egg and egg derivatives

Make sure you read product labels carefully to avoid products that contain egg and egg derivatives. 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. The terms “ovo” and “albumin” mean the product contains egg.*

Alcoholic cocktails/drinks  
Baby food  
Baked goods and baking mixes, e.g., breads, cakes, cookies, doughnuts, muffins, pancakes, pastries, pretzels  
Battered/fried foods  
Confectionary, e.g., candy, chocolate  
Cream-filled pies, e.g. banana, chocolate, coconut  
Creamy dressings, salad dressings, spreads, e.g., mayonnaise, Caesar salad dressing, tartar sauce  
Desserts, e.g., custard, dessert mixes, ice cream, meringue, pudding, sorbet  
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<sup>®</sup>, Orange Julius<sup>®</sup> (orange juice beverages)  
Pasta, e.g., egg noodles  
Quiche, soufflé  
Sauces, e.g., béarnaise, hollandaise, Newburg  
Soups, broths, bouillons

### Non-food sources of eggs

Anesthetic, e.g., Diprivan<sup>®</sup> (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 “Food Recalls and Allergy Alerts” notification service available at [www.inspection.gc.ca/english/tools/listserv/listsube.shtml?foodrecalls\\_rappelsaliments](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/tools/listserv/listsube.shtml?foodrecalls_rappelsaliments). When you sign up you will automatically receive food recall public warnings.

### Before eating

Allergists recommend that if you **do not have** your auto-injector device with you, that you **do not eat**. If an ingredient list says a product “may contain” or “does contain” egg or egg derivatives, do not eat it. If you do not recognize an ingredient or there is no ingredient list available, avoid the product.

## Watch out for allergen cross contamination!

Cross contamination is the transfer of an ingredient (food allergen) to a product that does not normally have that ingredient in it. Through cross contamination, a food that should not contain the allergen could become dangerous to eat for those who are allergic.

Cross contamination can happen:

- during **food manufacturing** through shared production and packaging equipment;
- at **retail** through shared equipment, e.g., cheese and deli meats sliced on the same slicer; and through bulk display of food products, e.g., bins of baked goods, bulk nuts; and
- during **food preparation** at home or in restaurants through equipment, utensils and hands.

## 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 prevent the occurrence of undeclared allergens and cross-contamination. The CFIA has developed guidelines and tools to aid them in developing these controls. 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 CFIA has also published several advisories to industry and consumers regarding allergens in food.

Health Canada has worked with the medical community, consumer associations, and the food industry to enhance labelling regulations for priority allergens, gluten sources and sulphites in pre-packaged food sold in Canada. Health Canada is proposing to amend the *Food and Drug Regulations* to require that the most common food and food ingredients that cause life-threatening or severe allergic reactions are always identified by their common names allowing consumers to easily recognize them.

## Where can I get more information?

For more information on:

- food allergies;
  - ordering free copies of this pamphlet; and
  - subscribing to the "Food Recalls and Allergy Alerts" e-mail notification service,
- visit the CFIA Website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) or call **1-800-442-2342/TTY 1-800-465-7735** (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday to Friday).

Below are some organizations that can provide additional allergy information:

Allergy/Asthma Information Association [www.aaia.ca](http://www.aaia.ca)  
Anaphylaxis Canada [www.anaphylaxis.ca](http://www.anaphylaxis.ca)  
Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires  
[www.aqaa.qc.ca](http://www.aqaa.qc.ca) (French only)  
Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology  
[www.csaci.ca](http://www.csaci.ca) (English only)  
Health Canada [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

*Developed in consultation with Allergy/Asthma Information Association, Anaphylaxis Canada, Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires, Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and Health Canada.*

