

## Special Needs Handout

# Read a Food Label for Allergens and Ingredients

A food label tells many things about a food. A food label provides information about possible food allergens. There are three places to look on a food label for a possible food allergen.

1. The front panel of the label must show the product name. The product name may provide a clue that the food contains an allergen. The name SoJo Soy Drink is an example. The product name suggests the food contains soy.

When the name is not a clear description of the food, the label must describe the food in common terms. For example, a cracker made from wheat and oats has the product name *Crunchy Country Crisps*. The box would also need a statement ‘Oven baked wheat and oat crackers’ near the *Crunchy Country Crisps* name. This statement makes it clear the product is a cracker made from wheat and oats.

Check the front of the package for clues that the product might contain allergens. Product names and descriptions may indicate an allergen.

2. The best place to look for an allergen is the ingredient label. All ingredients are listed in descending order by weight in the product.

The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) requires that food labels list, in plain words, any foods or ingredients that come from any of the eight most common allergens: milk, egg, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat. The specific type of tree nut, fish, or shellfish must be listed.

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While more than 160 foods have been identified to cause food allergies, over 90 percent of all documented food allergies in the U.S. are related to the eight major food allergens identified by FALCPA. They are the most likely to result in severe or life-threatening reactions.

Food packages can show allergens in the ingredient list in one of two ways.

- The allergen can be listed in parentheses after the item in the list, as shown in Option 1.
- A statement can appear near the ingredient list that states the food contains one of the major allergens, as shown in Option 2.

#### Option 1:

Ingredients: Enriched flour (**wheat** flour, malted barley, niacin, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), sugar, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, and/or cottonseed oil, high fructose corn syrup, whey (**milk**), **eggs**, vanilla, natural and artificial flavoring, salt, leavening (sodium acid pyrophosphate, monocalcium phosphate), lecithin (**soy**), mono- and diglycerides (emulsifier)

#### Option 2:

Contains Wheat, Milk, Eggs, and Soy

Source: Food Allergen Labeling And Consumer Protection Act of 2004 Questions and Answers, U.S. Food and Drug Administration retrieved June 8, 2009 from [www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/FoodAllergensLabeling/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/ucm106890.htm#q22](http://www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/FoodAllergensLabeling/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/ucm106890.htm#q22)

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3. Food companies may state on the label if a food is made in a plant that also processes a major food allergen. The labeling laws do not require these statements; the statements are voluntary by food companies.

Remember to check product labels often for a potential allergen. A food company may change their ingredients without changing the product name.