

# A Guide to Managing **SESAME ALLERGY**



Sesame allergy is becoming more common in the United States. If you have a true sesame allergy, this guide will help you manage sesame allergy with confidence.

## What Are Symptoms of Sesame Allergy?

When you have sesame allergy, you need to be aware of the symptoms of anaphylaxis. Symptoms of anaphylaxis may include hives, vomiting, or trouble breathing. The treatment for anaphylaxis is injectable epinephrine.

### **Common signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis in children, teens, and adults:**

- Skin rash, itching, hives
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, or throat
- Shortness of breath, trouble breathing, wheezing (whistling sound during breathing)
- Stomach pain, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Uterine cramps
- Feeling like something awful is about to happen

### **Common signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis in infants and toddlers:<sup>1</sup>**

- Skin rash, itching, hives
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, or throat; ear pulling, scratching or putting fingers in ears; tongue thrusting or pulling
- Coughing, wheezing, hoarse cry, noisy breathing, chest or neck tugging, nostril flaring
- Stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea, spitting up, hiccups
- Arching back, bringing knees to the chest
- Rubbing eyes, itchy or red eyes



**Kids with Food Allergies**  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

## How Can I Prevent Sesame Allergy Reactions?

Sesame can be tricky to avoid. Sesame seeds are tiny and can easily fall off baked goods that contain them. They can find their way into other breads and foods not meant to contain sesame if they are near.

The only way to avoid an allergic reaction to sesame is to remove it from your diet. You can successfully manage your sesame allergy.

What you can do:

- Work with your doctor
- Read labels
- Be aware of cross-contact (when foods come into contact with each other and may transfer an allergen into a food that shouldn't have it)
- Communicate clearly with school staff, people who prepare your child's food, and babysitters and other caregivers

### Reading Labels

Sesame seeds come from the *sesamum indicum* plant. Sesame seeds can be found in many foods, especially baked goods and spice mixes. Sesame oil and pastes made from sesame seeds can be found in many spreads and sauces. Sesame is also a staple in many popular ethnic dishes.

By law, food companies must label their products clearly if they contain the foods that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) declares to be major allergens. In 2021, the FASTER Act added sesame to the list of major allergens recognized by the FDA.

Some food companies updated their labeling practices before that date. But foods produced before Jan. 1, 2023, may still be available for purchase. Remember that you still need to read every label every time.

When reading labels for sesame, it may be in parentheses after an ingredient in the ingredient list. It could also be in a statement under the ingredient list. Sometimes it will be in **bold**.

For example:

- Tahini (ground sesame)
- Contains: Sesame seeds

Some food companies put advisory statements on their labels. They may say "may contain sesame" or "made in a facility with sesame." These labels can be confusing and may not tell you the actual risk of the product. If you have questions about advisory labels, talk with your allergist.

Some foods and products do not have to follow the allergy label law and may contain sesame:

- Arts and crafts supplies
- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs
- Cosmetics and personal care items (such as, makeup, lotions, and soaps)
- Alcohol
- Toys
- Pet food
- Food served in restaurants, cafeterias, or by other food service providers



**If a food item does not have a label, you can't read it, or you have any doubts, don't eat it. Always read the entire label every time. Food companies may change their recipes.**

Most states in the U.S. do not have regulations regarding food allergies and restaurants. Ingredients in restaurant foods may vary. Cross-contact is also more likely. Look for places that have food allergy policies and allergy menus. Give the staff a chef card that alerts them to your allergy and lists sesame.



Kids with Food Allergies has many resources to help you manage food allergies. Search our Safe Eats® Allergy-Friendly Recipes Collection of almost 1,500 member-submitted recipes at: [kidswithfoodallergies.org/recipes](https://kidswithfoodallergies.org/recipes)

## Preventing Cross-Contact

Cross-contact occurs when a food allergen comes in contact with food or an item not intended to contain that allergen. There are several precautions you should take to avoid food mix-ups and accidental cross-contact.

If you have both “safe” and “unsafe” versions of similar items in your home, take steps to make sure they are easily marked. If the containers look the same, create a system for your family to prevent accidents. It may be helpful to use colored stickers or to store the food with the allergen on a different shelf.

### References

1. Pistiner, M., Mendez-Reyes, J. E., Eftekhari, S., Carver, M., Lieberman, J., Wang, J., & Camargo, C. A. (2021). Caregiver-reported presentation of severe food-induced allergic reactions in infants and toddlers. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaip.2020.11.005>
2. Sesame Allergy Common Among Children With Food Allergies. (2019, November 18). National Institutes of Health (NIH). <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/sesame-allergy-common-among-children-food-allergies>



## Will My Child Outgrow a Sesame Allergy?

Around 20 to 30% of children outgrow their sesame allergy.<sup>2</sup> But for some people, a sesame allergy can be lifelong.



## Is There a Treatment for Sesame Allergy?

Currently, there are no FDA-approved treatments for sesame allergy. The best way to prevent sesame allergy reactions is to avoid sesame completely. But some research is being done on sesame allergy treatments, such as oral immunotherapy (OIT).



Sign up for KFA's community to stay up to date on sesame allergy news: [kidswithfoodallergies.org/join](https://kidswithfoodallergies.org/join)



# SESAME INGREDIENT LIST



If you see these ingredients on a label, it means it contains sesame and is not safe for someone with sesame allergy. If the product is regulated by the FDA and manufactured after Jan. 1, 2023, the word “sesame” must appear on the label. Keep in mind that some foods may have been manufactured or packaged before Jan. 1, 2023, so read every label every time.

## Contains Sesame

**Benne, benne seed, benniseed**

**Gingelly, gingelly oil**

**Gomasio** (sesame salt)

**Sesame flour**

**Sesame oil**

**Sesame paste**

**Sesame salt**

**Sesame seed**

**Sesamol**

**Sesamolina**

**Sesamum indicum, sesamum**

**Sim sim**

**Tahini, tahina, tehina**

**Til**

## Sesame Is Sometimes Found in

**Flavoring, natural flavoring**

**Breads, bagels, and buns**

**Cereals, especially granola and muesli**

**Crackers and chips**

**Hummus**

**Protein, granola, and snack bars**

**Sandwich spreads**

**Sauces and salad dressings**

**Spice and seasoning mixes**

**Tempeh**

**Trail and nut mixes**

**Vegetable oils**

**Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern dishes**

**Baba ghanoush**

**Goma doff** – a Japanese dessert

**Halvah** – candy made from sesame paste

**Pasteli** – a type of Greek dessert

**Stir fry**

**Sushi**

**Vegetarian and vegan burgers**



For more information and other resources, please visit: [kidswithfoodallergies.org/sesame](https://kidswithfoodallergies.org/sesame)

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# SESAME ALLERGY Chef Cards

Take all food allergies seriously. • Read all ingredient labels.

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When you eat out, use these chef cards to let the restaurant staff know how to help you avoid allergic reactions to sesame.

CUT

**I have a sesame allergy!**  
**I must avoid all foods that contain sesame.**

**Contains Sesame**

Benne, benne seed, benniseed	Sesame seed
Gingelly, gingelly oil	Sesamol
Gomasio (sesame salt)	Sesamolina
Sesame flour	Sesamum indicum, sesamum
Sesame oil	Sim sim
Sesame paste	Tahini, tahina, tehina
Sesame salt	Til

**Sesame is Sometimes Found in**

Flavoring, natural flavoring	Sauces and salad dressings
Breads, bagels, and buns	Spice and seasoning mixes
Cereals and granola	Tempeh
Crackers and chips	Trail and nut mixes
Hummus	Vegetable oils
Protein, granola, and snack bars	Vegetarian and vegan burgers
Sandwich spreads	

Please check all foods for the ingredients on this card, including cooking oils, marinades, sauces, and seasonings. Use separate and clean utensils, equipment, surfaces, and gloves.

**KFA** For more detailed information and a list of resources, please visit: [kidswithfoodallergies.org/sesame](https://kidswithfoodallergies.org/sesame)  
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CUT

**CHEF: FOOD ALLERGY ALERT**

**I have food allergies!**  
In order for me to avoid an allergic reaction,  
I **must avoid** all food that contain:

<input type="checkbox"/> Milk	<input type="checkbox"/> Egg	Other Allergens: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Peanut	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree Nuts	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Wheat	<input type="checkbox"/> Gluten	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sesame	<input type="checkbox"/> Soy	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fish	<input type="checkbox"/> Shellfish	_____

**Before preparing my food, please take these steps to help keep me safe. I appreciate you!**

- Read labels to look for the allergens listed on the front of this card. Please check all foods including cooking oils, marinades, sauces and seasonings.
- Please use separate and clean utensils, equipment and surfaces to prepare my meal.
- Wash hands with soapy water and change gloves.

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