



Eight Is Not Enough

Of the approximately 160 foods that people are allergic to, eight are responsible for 90 percent of all food allergy reactions in the U.S.:

-  DAIRY
-  EGGS
-  FISH
-  SHELLFISH
-  TREE NUTS
-  PEANUTS
-  WHEAT
-  SOY

Many allergists consider sesame to be #9 on the list.

In Search of Sesame

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires manufacturers to highlight the top 8 allergens on food labels. Whereas whey, butter and cream must be labeled as “milk” somewhere on an ingredient list, sesame may be listed under a variety of names including generic terms like “flavoring,” “spices” and “seasoning.”

Some ingredients to watch for:

- benne, bene seed, benniseed
- gingilly, gingilly oil
- sesamol, sesamolina, sesamum indicum
- sim sim
- tahini
- til
- vegetable oil
- natural flavoring
- spices
- seasoning

When in doubt, call the manufacturer to determine if a product is safe.

By Erin Malawer

As a toddler, my son was diagnosed with allergies to eight different foods: peanuts, tree nuts, dairy, eggs, wheat, soy, corn and sesame.

Finding foods manufactured without cross-contamination to nuts is tough; meals that don't use butter, a challenge; and I dare you to find a commercial meal that doesn't contain soy.

But of all the foods my son is allergic to, it's sesame that causes the most problems. By far.

And, of all the food allergies he wishes to outgrow, sesame is at the top of his list.

So, why is something this small causing such big problems?

Sesame allergy is growing at a faster rate in the United States than other food allergies. Many believe this is due to the increased prevalence of international cuisine on American plates.

Because sesame is a less common allergy, it can be difficult to get proper information about sesame ingredients, and manufacturers are not required to list it by name on labels.

Sesame is commonly found in Middle



Eastern, Indian and Asian cuisines; it offers protein in vegetarian dishes. Sesame shows up in salad dressing, hummus, marinades, granola bars and as an ingredient in (not just on) hamburger buns and baked goods. It may also be found in beauty products such as lip balms and lotions.

Our family allergist described sesame as a cousin allergy to the peanut. That's because individuals allergic to sesame are often also allergic to peanuts and tree nuts.

Like nut allergies, allergic reactions to sesame can be severe with symptoms including difficulty breathing, throat swelling and anaphylaxis. Those with sesame allergy should always carry two epinephrine auto-injectors in the event of an accidental exposure.

Erin Malawer is the founder of AllergyStrong, an organization dedicated to supporting low-income families living with food allergies. Read her blog at www.shmallergy.wordpress.com.

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