

Family Child Care Food Allergy Fact Sheets



Sesame Allergies

Sesame is one of the nine major allergens in the United States. Together, they cause about 90% of all food-related allergic reactions. Sesame is the most common seed to cause allergic reactions. This fact sheet will discuss how to manage sesame allergies in a family child care home.

When did sesame become a major allergen?

Sesame was recognized as a major allergen by the *Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act of 2021*. This law requires manufacturers to label sesame as an allergen on packaged foods. It took effect on by January 1, 2023. Previously, sesame may have appeared undeclared in ingredients lists under names such as “natural flavoring” and “spice blends.” Contact the food manufacturer if there is any uncertainty about a food containing sesame.



How are children affected by sesame allergies?

For children in the United States, sesame is the ninth most common food allergy. Sesame allergies affect an estimated 1.6 million children and adults in the United States. Only about 20% – 30% of children with a sesame allergy will outgrow it. Roughly 4 out of 5 people with a sesame allergy have additional food allergies, such as peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, and milk.

What foods contain sesame?

Sesame is used in a variety of culinary ways, such as oils, flavorings, spices, pastes, and seeds. It can also be in some household items such as pet foods, medications, nutritional supplements, perfumes, and cosmetics (hair products, soaps, lotions, skin creams, and lip glosses).

Sesame seeds often become “electrostatic.” This causes them to cling to charged surfaces such as other foods, making it difficult to prevent cross-contact. Cross-contact is when one food allergen comes into contact with another food, transferring the allergens to the new food. A child with a sesame allergy should not consume a product that is labeled with an advisory statement such as being produced in a facility with sesame.

The following charts list common names for sesame, and some products that may contain sesame. It is important to be aware of the different types of sesame, sesame ingredients, and dishes that may contain sesame in daily life.



Common Names for Sesame

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anjonjoli • Benne, benne seed, beniseed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gingelly • <i>Sesamum indicum</i>* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simsim • Til or Teel |
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*The scientific name for sesame, *Sesamum indicum*, may be used on labels of non-food items, such as cosmetics, medications, nutritional supplements, and pet foods.

Sesame Ingredients

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sesame flour • Sesame meal • Sesame oil* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sesame paste • Sesame powder • Sesame seed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sesamin • Sesamol • Sesamolin |
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*Sesame oil is usually “unrefined,” and consuming it can cause an allergic reaction.

Dishes, Foods, and Products That May Contain Sesame

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked goods (bagels, breads, breadsticks, hamburger buns, rolls) • Baba ganoush • Candy, confection • Chips (bagel chips, pita chips, tortilla chips) • Crackers (melba toast, sesame snap bars) • Dressings, gravies, marinades, sauces • Falafel • Goma dofu/gomadofu • Gomasio (sesame salt) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granola • Herbs and herbal drinks • Halva/halvah/halwah • Hummus • Margarine • Muesli • Natural flavorings • Noodles • Pasteli • Pretzels • Processed meats/sausages • Protein and energy bars • Rice • Rice cakes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risotto • Sesame salt • Shish kabobs • Snack mix • Soups • Spices/spice blends • Stews • Stir-fry • Sushi • Tahini • Tempeh • Turkish cake • Veggie burgers |
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What substitutes can be used for sesame?

The following chart lists common menu items that may be used as safe substitutions for food items that contain sesame. Always carefully read ingredient lists on food labels, even for foods that do not usually contain sesame.

Menu Items That May Contain Sesame*	Possible Substitutes*†
Bagels, breads, breadsticks, hamburger buns, rolls	Bagels, bread, breadsticks, hamburger buns, and rolls without sesame seeds
Crackers, pretzels	Crackers, pretzels without sesame
Dressings, gravies, marinades, sauces	Dressings, gravies, marinades, and sauces that do not contain sesame oil or sesame seeds
Granola, muesli	Granola or muesli without sesame
Main or side dish with baba ganoush, hummus, or tahini	Main or side dish without baba ganoush, hummus, or tahini
Pasta, rice, or stir-fried dishes	Pasta, rice, or stir-fried dishes without sesame seeds
Processed meats	100% beef, pork, poultry, fish, or shellfish; beans, peas, legumes
Soups or stews	Soups or stews without sesame

*All meals and snacks claimed for reimbursement must meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements. Please visit www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks for more information. For children with food allergies, providers are required to provide meal modifications as stated in the child's medical statement signed by a State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. A State licensed healthcare professional is defined as an individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law. Registered dietitians can also submit medical statements for meal modifications for children with disabilities. Registered dietitians are not required to have a State license. CACFP operations are required to implement this change by October 1, 2025. Meal modifications may require providing meals and snacks that do not meet CACFP meal pattern requirements. These meals are reimbursable as long as there is a medical statement on file documenting the necessary accommodations. Providers may choose to accommodate food-related disabilities without a signed medical statement if the meal modifications still meet the meal pattern requirements. Refer to the *Family Child Care Food Allergy Fact Sheets – Accommodating Children with Food Allergies* for more information.

†Always review the ingredient list to verify ingredients and check for possible cross-contact (look for advisory statements or contact manufacturer).

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For More Information

Food Allergy Research & Education
www.foodallergy.org

Institute of Child Nutrition
www.theicn.org/foodsafety

U.S. Food and Drug Administration *Food Allergens*
www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/food-allergies



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<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

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