

# Manager's Corner

## Reading an Ingredient Statement for Allergens

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# **Institute of Child Nutrition**

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### **PURPOSE**

Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

### **VISION**

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

### **MISSION**

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the Institute of Child Nutrition at the University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

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Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2018). *Manager's corner: Reading and Ingredient Statement for Allergens*. University, MS: Author.

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09/04/2018

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## Professional Standards

### FOOD SAFETY AND HACCP TRAINING – 2600

**Employee will be able to effectively utilize all food safety program guidelines and health department regulations to ensure optimal food safety.**

2620 – Practice general food safety procedures.

2630 – Practice Federal, State, and local food safety regulations and guidance.

2640 – Promote a culture of food safety behaviors in the school community.

## Introduction

*Manager's Corner: Reading an Ingredient Statement for Allergens* is designed for directors/managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. This resource is series one of a continuous set of training resources designed to give directors/managers an easy-to-use lesson plan for training staff in various topics.

*Manager's Corner: Reading an Ingredient Statement for Allergens* provides a method for using and training with many of the Institute of Child Nutrition's resources. Every lesson plan contains the following:

- learning objective,
- statement explaining the importance of the topic,
- list of materials,
- instructions on how to present the information,
- questions to ask staff, and
- additional resources to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the director/manager.



## Reading an Ingredient Statement for Allergens

**Objective:** Demonstrate how to find allergens on an ingredient statement.

**Why it is important:** School nutrition employees need to be able to identify possible food allergens in the ingredient list to prevent them from being served to children with food allergies.

### Materials:

- Assortment of food items from the kitchen with ingredient statements
- Reading Ingredient Statements for Food Allergens handout

### Instructions:

Use the Reading Ingredient Statements for Food Allergens handout to help explain mandatory and precautionary labeling for allergens, and how to read the ingredient statement for allergens. With a variety of food items, show staff how to find allergens on ingredient statements. Have staff read different labels and discuss. Ask provided questions and answer all staff questions when done.

### Questions for the staff:

- What allergens are required to be labeled in plain language in the ingredient list or listed in a "Contains" statement?
  - **Peanuts, tree nuts, soy, milk, egg, fish, shellfish, wheat**
- Can you serve a food with precautionary labeling to a child with food allergies?
  - **No, products labeled with precautionary labeling are not safe for people with known food allergies.**
- What steps should be taken if the label is unclear?
  - **Contact the manufacturer for clarification.**
- Labels must be maintained for how long after the food has been served?
  - **24 hours**
- How often should food ingredient statements be read?
  - **Whenever the product is received**
- You are checking the invoice for Italian tomato paste being delivered. You notice that it has been substituted by the distributor, and the label states that it contains wheat. What do you do?
  - **Document the allergen on the invoice.**
  - **Tell the director immediately so it can be documented.**

### Additional Resources:

- Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (2004)
- Food Allergy Fact Sheets: [www.Theicn.org/foodallergy](http://www.Theicn.org/foodallergy)
  - Egg Allergies
  - Fish Allergies
  - Milk Allergies
  - Peanut Allergies
  - Shellfish Allergies
  - Soy Allergies
  - Tree Nut Allergies
  - Wheat Allergies

## Reading Ingredient Statements for Food Allergens

### Food Allergen Labeling

The *Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act* is a federal law that became effective January 2006. It mandates that the labels of foods containing the eight major food allergens be declared in plain language on the product.

Eight Major Allergens			
Egg	Peanuts	Shellfish	Tree nuts
Fish	Milk	Soy	Wheat

There are specifics on where and how the information is to be presented. The food ingredient MUST be in the ingredient in parenthesis following the common name, written as the common name of the major food allergen, or listed after the ingredient list by stating product "Contains" the particular allergen.

**"Contains" followed by the name**

Example: "Contains: milk and wheat"

**Parenthetical statement or common name in the list of ingredients**

Example: "wheat flour and albumin (egg)"

### Precautionary Labeling

There is another type of allergy labeling called precautionary labeling. This type of labeling is NOT covered in the *Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act*, so it varies widely from manufacturer to manufacturer. One type of precautionary labeling is the "May Contain" statement. Other types of precautionary labeling are the "Made on Equipment" and "Processed in Facilities" statements.

**"May Contain" statement**

Example: "May contain traces of peanuts"

**"Made on Equipment"**

Example: "Made on equipment that makes products containing eggs and tree nuts"

**"Processed in Facilities"**

Example: "Processed in facilities that also processing wheat."

### Reading Ingredient Statements

Ingredient statements should be read when the product is received since suppliers may make product substitutions, formulas may change, or vendors could change. Check all labels carefully every time. Do not rely on specifications, fact sheets, or the last shipment. Read the label each time the product is received. Contact the manufacturer if you have any questions or are uncertain about the food item.

### Holding Labels

It is recommended that labels of all products served be kept for 24 hours as a precaution so the label is available in case someone has an allergic reaction. Unlike a foodborne illness outbreak where the outbreak can occur days after a food is served, an allergic reaction will happen the day of service. If food is going to be served as leftovers or reused in another recipe, the label should be kept until all product is either consumed or disposed. Keeping a label library is a common practice; some keep the actual label, some schools can scan the label.



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