

Sesame free diet

Your child has been diagnosed with an allergy to sesame. This leaflet is a guide to avoiding all sesame and sesame-containing products. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to one of the paediatric allergy dietitians looking after your child.

Food labelling

Sesame is classed as one of the 14 most-allergenic foods. This means that food labelling rules require that pre-packaged foods sold in the UK and EU show clearly on the label if it contains (or one of its ingredients contains) sesame seeds. Allergens (substances that cause allergic reactions) must now be emphasised on the label, for example, by listing them in **bold**.

'May contain traces'

Some products carry the label 'may contain traces of sesame'. These are products that are not intended to contain sesame but might contain traces of the allergen due to manufacturing or marketing practices. Sesame seeds are difficult to control in the food industry, and cross-contamination is difficult to prevent. **We recommend you also avoid these products.**

It is important to read the ingredients label **every time** before buying a product, to check if it contains sesame, as ingredients lists change frequently.

Foods sold loose

Foods sold loose, for example, at bakeries, delicatessens and butchers, now also have to comply with these labelling laws.

Cross-contamination

This happens when a sesame-free food accidentally comes into contact with sesame during the food preparation or storage process. Even small traces of sesame could cause an allergic reaction if eaten. This can be an issue in bakeries and at patisserie counters in particular, where unwrapped bread and baked products might become contaminated with sesame seeds when they are made on the same premises.

Eating out

The food labelling laws also apply to the catering sector. When you eat out or buy takeaway food, the businesses have to give information on allergenic ingredients either verbally or written down.

Sesame is used particularly frequently in Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Turkish and Middle Eastern cooking. Be careful with stir-fries, curries, bread products, and vegetarian dishes. We recommend that you always ask if an item is sesame-free, and stress the seriousness of the allergic condition. If staff cannot give assurance that a dish is safe, it is best to avoid it.

Food containing sesame

Sesame is a major ingredient in:

- tahini (a sesame paste, frequently used in Turkish and Middle Eastern cuisine)
- hummus (a paste made from chickpeas and tahini)
- halva (a confectionery product that is also made from tahini)

Note of caution: the above 3 products are sometimes added to other foods.

Other common sources of sesame include:

- bakery products (such as speciality breads, bagels and pastries)
- biscuits, crackers, breadsticks and rice cakes
- muesli, health food snacks

Some pre-packed delicatessen and processed foods contain sesame, so always read the label. For example:

- noodles, dips, soups
- sausages, samosas, processed meats, vegetable burgers
- chutney, salads and salad dressings, mixed spices
- cereal and confectionery bars

Sesame is also an unexpected ingredient in some herbal drinks, for example, Aqua Libra.

Sesame oil

Sesame oil should also be avoided. It is used unrefined in products (it is made by cold-pressing sesame seeds), which means it can cause an allergic reaction. It is popular in Eastern cooking and can be used in salad dressings. Sesame oil can also be in some medicinal products (ask the pharmacist for ingredient information).

Support and more information

Association of UK Dietitians, [phone](tel:01212008080) 0121 200 8080, [web](http://www.bda.uk.com) www.bda.uk.com

The Eatwell Guide – Food Standards Agency,
[web](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx) www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx

Food and allergy updates – Food Standards Agency – email or text alert service,
[web](http://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/subscribe) www.food.gov.uk/about-us/subscribe

The Anaphylaxis Campaign, [phone](tel:01252542029) 01252 542029, [web](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) www.anaphylaxis.org.uk

Allergy UK, [phone](tel:01322619898) 01322 619898, [web](http://www.allergyuk.org) www.allergyuk.org

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's diet, please contact the paediatric allergy dietitians, [phone](tel:02071888494) 020 7188 8494, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [web](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets) www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

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