

# **Safe & Nourishing Eating Guide for Food Allergies**

Simple steps to eat safely, confidently, and well

*This guide is designed for people living with food allergies, especially those who are new to managing them. It focuses on safety, awareness, and balanced nutrition while encouraging confidence and self-care. The information can also be adapted for other food-related health conditions with guidance from a healthcare provider.*

## **Understanding Food Allergies**

Food allergies occur when the immune system reacts to certain foods. Even small amounts can cause symptoms, which may range from mild to severe or even deadly.

### **Common food allergens include:**

- Peanuts and tree nuts
- Milk (dairy)
- Eggs
- Wheat
- Soy
- Fish and shellfish
- Sesame
- Corn (corn derivatives)

Knowing your specific allergens is the foundation of eating safely.

## **Read Food Labels Every Time**

Reading labels is one of the most important habits for food allergy safety.

### **Look for:**

“Contains” statements listing allergens

“May contain” or “Processed in a facility with” warnings

Hidden ingredient names (example: dairy may appear as whey or casein)

### **Important reminders:**

Ingredients can change without notice

Always re-check labels, even on familiar foods

If a label is unclear or missing information, **do not eat** the product

## **Prevent Cross-Contact**

Cross-contact happens when a safe food touches an allergen during preparation, cooking, or serving.

### **At home:**

- Wash hands, surfaces, and utensils thoroughly
- Use separate cutting boards or cookware if needed
- Store allergen-free foods separately and label them clearly

**Away from home:**

- Clearly tell others about your food allergy
- Ask how food is prepared, not just what ingredients are used
- Avoid buffets, shared utensils, and self-serve stations when possible

**Build Simple, Balanced Meals**

Food allergies do not mean poor nutrition. Balanced meals help support energy, immunity, and overall health.

**A simple balanced meal includes:**

- Protein: meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, or safe alternatives
- Fruits & vegetables: for vitamins, minerals, and fiber
- Safe grains or starches: rice, potatoes, corn, or other tolerated options
- Healthy fats (if safe): olive oil, avocado, seeds

If you must avoid entire food groups, a registered dietitian can help ensure nutritional needs are met safely.

**Plan for Safety**

Planning reduces stress and lowers the risk of accidental exposure.

**Helpful habits:**

- Keep safe snacks with you
- Prepare meals at home when possible
- Read restaurant menus in advance
- Practice clearly explaining your allergy to others

Confidence grows with preparation.

**Keep a Food Journal**

A food journal is a powerful tool, especially when learning to manage food allergies.

**What to track:**

- Foods and drinks consumed
- Ingredients and preparation method
- Time eaten
- Any symptoms or reactions
- Where the food was eaten

**Benefits:**

- Helps identify hidden triggers
- Supports conversations with healthcare providers
- Builds awareness and confidence around food choices

## **Have an Allergy Safety Plan**

### **If you have food allergies:**

- Carry emergency medication if prescribed
- Know the signs of an allergic reaction
- Make sure family, friends, or coworkers know how to help in an emergency

Preparation can save lives and provide peace of mind.

### **Be Patient and Kind to Yourself**

- Living with food allergies is a learning process.
- Mistakes can happen—focus on learning, not blame
- New habits take time
- Support from healthcare professionals or allergy communities can help

You are doing the best you can, and that is enough.

### **Medical Disclaimer**

This food guide is for educational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Always consult with a physician, allergist, or registered dietitian regarding food allergies, dietary changes, or medical concerns. Do not rely on this guide in place of professional medical guidance. In the event of an allergic reaction, seek immediate medical attention.