

Avoiding sesame when you are allergic

Nutrition and Dietetics

Information for Patients

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How are sesame seeds used in foods?

Sesame seeds are the tiny round clear seeds of the sesame plant. They are used as:

- a decoration on bread products (like sesame buns),
- spreads (like tahini or hummous),
- cereals style bars (like sesame sticks).

If you have been diagnosed with sesame allergy you must **not** eat any foods containing sesame.

Sesame seeds can also be pressed to make sesame oil. This is a cooking oil with a pale yellow or darker brown colour. You must not have sesame oil. It will have small amounts of sesame seed.

This oil is often used in South and East Asian cooking. Some people with sesame allergy may also have a skin reaction to shampoo, skin cream or other toiletries that contain sesame oil. This will be labelled as **Sesamum indicum** on the list of ingredients.

What do I need to avoid?

Foods from these restaurants or cuisine are likely to have sesame or be contaminated with sesame:

- Asian
- Oriental
- Greek
- Turkish
- Salad bars and bakery products

Sesame seeds are also often used in bird foods preparations and treats / foods for pets like hamsters, gerbils.

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Reading food labels

You must check the ingredients labels for sesame.

- The word **SESAME** will be written clearly in bold type or larger font in the ingredients list.
- If a food has no label you must ask if it contains sesame. Avoid any foods where ingredients are unknown like at a cake sale, ice cream van, sandwiches or party food. They could contain hidden sesame.
- With pre-packaged food, below the ingredients list, it may say 'may contain traces sesame' or 'made in a factory that handles sesame'. This is used to state that a food may sometimes have been contaminated. This is rare and is unlikely to cause a reaction. You **can** eat these foods. But always make sure you have your medicine with you in case of mild allergic symptoms. You can talk about this with your doctor or dietitian.
- Most fresh bread and bakery goods will be unsuitable. There is high risk of contamination from other sesame products.
- Recipes and ingredients lists change often. You must always check the label even if it is something you have been able to eat before.

Which foods contain sesame?

The following common foods contain or may contain sesame. This list is not exclusive and it is always good practice to check the ingredients list:

	Do not eat
Breakfast cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some brands of muesli
Breads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most breads / bakery goods from fresh bread counters • Sesame buns / rolls and seed decorated loaves • Some Indian breads like chapattis • Granary / seeded breads
Biscuits / cakes / snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some cereal bars • Sesame sticks / snaps • Unlabelled cakes / health food store fresh produce • Sesame crackers • Some bread sticks, pretzels • Halvah (a Greek, Middle Eastern and Asian dessert)

	Do not eat
Savoury spreads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some vegetarian spreads like vegetable pate • Hummous • Tahini paste
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some “Toppings” and dressings on salads • Some “Dips” for breadsticks • Some Chinese, Thai and Indian snacks and meals

Sesame-free recipes

Hummous

Ingredients:

- 1 drained can chickpeas
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 to 2 tablespoon water (adjust based on preference)
- Half (½) teaspoon salt (adjust based on preference)
- Flavourings to taste like garlic, cumin, paprika, lemon juice

Method:

1. Place all ingredients into a food processor and blitz until smooth.

Wheat flour halva (Turkish)

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoon pine nuts

Method:

1. Boil sugar and water together until sugar dissolves into a syrup, then reduce heat to low.
2. Cook flour, butter, oil and pine nuts together over a low heat until a smooth paste forms. Keep stirring until the paste turns brown. This should take around 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Remove flour mixture from the heat and whisk in hot syrup gradually to form a soft paste.
4. Spread mix into a shallow bowl and cool to room temperature.

Contact details:

Please contact your allergy team should you have any questions: **0116 258 6694**

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Previous reference:

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