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Living With a Sensitivity to Soy



Dealing with the everyday problems associated with a soy sensitivity can be frustrating, but for those of us who are sensitive to soy, it's an issue that demands our careful (and constant) attention, whenever we're selecting foods. Most of us who are sensitive to soy, are also sensitive to most legumes, and that means that very few commercially processed foods are safe for us. Products that target the vegetarian and vegan market especially, virtually all contain ingredients that are derived from soy, or one or more legumes.

Although a food sensitivity is not the same as a food allergy, as most of us are well aware, those of us who have a soy sensitivity find it necessary to follow virtually the same precautions as those who have a soy allergy. In most cases the primary difference is that a soy allergy will cause an immediate reaction, while a soy sensitivity will usually result in a reaction several hours after the exposure. Fortunately, a reaction to a soy sensitivity will not result in the risk of a fatal outcome, but the symptoms resulting from a soy exposure can be so severe that we are always well motivated to do our best to keep soy out of our diet.

FALCPA fails to cover all the bases.

The U.S. Congress passed the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act in 2004 (FALCPA) to require manufacturers to list all the ingredients derived from the most common eight allergens, including soy, on product labels, in plain language that can be easily understood by consumers. Unfortunately, both the law, and the Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) interpretation and administration of the law, leave a lot to be desired.



Labels are typically difficult to read and understand.

Most labels display an ingredient list that uses print sizes that are typically too small to easily read under the lighting conditions in most grocery stores, the list is often obscured by overlaid shading or colors, and it frequently contains chemical names that we may not even recognize, let alone consider to be plain language. Ingredient lists on labels that could actually be easily read and understood, would not only save most of us a lot of time, but it would eliminate most mistakes that we sometimes make when grocery shopping. Why do processed food product manufacturers continue to use difficult to read and understand ingredient lists, when they are almost surely well aware that most consumers would prefer ingredient lists that can be easily read and understood? Healthy ingredients are high on the list of priorities of most shoppers these days, regardless of whether or not they have anyone in their family who has food sensitivities.

Many Internet sites address food sensitivity issues.

Among all the articles available on the Internet that are devoted to soy allergy, an article written by a registered dietitian, Jill Castle (2020, January 20) appears to provide the most comprehensive coverage of most of the issues faced by patients who have soy allergies, and much of the following information is based on that source. As she points out, the law was written so that products that contain refined soy oil, or soy lecithin, are not required to report these ingredients as a soy allergen. In other words if the soy oil or soy lecithin is a major ingredient, it may be listed among the ingredients, but it will not be listed as an allergen. But if the soy oil or soy lecithin is only a minor ingredient, then it may not be listed on the label, at all.

In order to stay safe, we have to be aware of these shortcomings in the law.

Apparently, the Congress either misunderstood the relevant research, or they assumed that such small amounts of soy would not be a problem for most individuals who have a soy allergy. However, if they actually believed that these small amounts would not be a problem, that implies an extremely poor understanding of allergies, in general. But despite this fault in the law, most (although not all) of us who are sensitive to soy, are indeed sensitive to soy oil and soy lecithin.

FALCPA does not cover raw agricultural products.

As the article points out (Castle, 2020, January 20), raw agricultural commodities are not included in the law, and this can be another major source of soy contamination. The wax or horticultural oils sprayed on fruits and vegetables often contain soy oil. The broth injected into chickens and claimed to be a “tenderizing solution”, often contains soy. Soy is commonly used for rosemary extraction, therefore, the rosemary extract commonly used in processed turkeys typically contain traces of soy. Eggs are often sprayed with soy oil to increase their shelf life.

Jean's List of Soy Products/Additives

A list of foods that either contain soy, or may contain soy, can be found on the Discussion and Support Forum associated with our website in the post titled “Food and Food Ingredients That Should Be Avoided”, under the category, “Special Information for People Who Have Multiple Intolerances”. This list was posted by a founding member, Jean, on June 26 in 2005 and as she points out, the list may not be complete, because food laboratories occasionally develop new

ingredients.

- * indicates it could contain soy
- Alpha tocopherol (Vitamin E)*
- Amylases
- Broth
- Calcium stearate*
- Calcium stearoyl lactylate
- Diglyceride*
- Disodium guanylate
- Disodium inosinate
- Edamame
- Glycerin*
- Glycerides*, any
- Glycerol*
- Isolates
- Lecithin
- Linoleic acid
- Miso
- Monoglyceride*
- Natto
- Natural coloring*
- Natural flavoring*
- Okara
- Olean*
- Olestra*
- Oxystearin
- Propylene glycol monostearate
- Shoyu
- Sodium stearoyl fumarate
- Soy anything
- Soy oil
- Stearoyls
- Structured protein fiber
- Tempeh
- Textured vegetable protein*
- Tofu
- Vegetable anything on food label*
- Vegetable broth*
- Vegetable oil*
- Vegetable protein*
- Vitamin E*
- Yuba

Products to beware of: margarine, mayonnaise, salad dressing, miso soup, tofu, meat alternatives, nondairy anything, shortening, whipped topping, tuna.

It should be noted that Asian foods, especially, tend to contain soy, but most of those foods are in Jean's list. Virtually all nut milks contain gums that are derived from legumes. And many nonfood items that can cause problems, such as lip balms and cosmetics, contain soy derivatives.



Eating out is fraught with peril.

Eating away from home, is risky for anyone who has food sensitivities, but it's especially risky for those of us who are sensitive to soy. Soy is hidden in so many foods and ingredients that even experienced restaurant

chefs may overlook it, making eating at restaurants extremely risky. And despite the best of intentions, friends and relatives who claim that they can provide safe meals for those of us who are sensitive to soy, typically cannot. This can often lead to soul-searching situations, because our friends and relatives are sincere, and if we refuse to eat their food, they will surely feel hurt. And sadly, if we acquiesce, we will usually regret that hasty decision, afterward. C'est la vie.

Reference

Castle, J. (2020, January 20). Food Choices for a Soy-Free Diet. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellhealth.com/food-and-ingredients-to-avoid-on-a-soy-free-diet-1324000>