

# Holidays' pitfalls for those with food allergies

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(HealthDay)—Holiday get-togethers can be risky for people with food allergies.

About 15 million [people](#) in the United States have one or more [food allergies](#).

"It's unfortunate that there's been such an uptick in food allergy diagnoses, but the good thing is people are talking about it and there's not as much stigma as there was previously," said Dr. Kara Wada, an [allergy](#) and immunology physician at Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

If you have food allergies and will attend a social event with a food focus, alert the hosts in advance. Make sure they know how to read food labels and to save the labels of packaged foods.

"The other thing to ask them to keep in mind is cross contamination. If the host is baking cookies, for instance, they should wash the cookie sheet that was used to make peanut butter cookies with hot soapy water before it's used to bake something that is nut-free," Wada said.

"Also, suggest using color-coded utensils so guests know which utensils go with each particular dish," she said.

Offer to bring dishes or snacks that are safe for you. Another option is to eat before the party and bring a snack with you.

Be cautious about foods that appear familiar, including fresh fruit and vegetables, pasta or meats. Check the labels to be on the safe side.

"Some pre-seasoned turkeys may have wheat, soy or milk in the brine or other flavorings. Some people may not realize pesto has nuts in it. There are even some cocktail mixes that are made with egg whites," Wada said.

If you have an epinephrine auto-injector to treat a severe allergic reaction, bring it with you, and review how and when to use it.

If you use your epinephrine, go to the [emergency department](#) afterward because the allergic reaction could last longer than the effects of the epinephrine. You'll be monitored there and receive more treatment if required, Wada explained.

**More information:** The American Academy of Family Physicians has more on [food allergies](#).

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