

Sesame Must Be on Foods Labels by 2023

A new law signed last week by President Biden, the FASTER Act (Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education & Research Act), requires that packaged foods made with sesame products list the product as an allergen on ingredient labels by Jan. 1, 2023.

Sesame becomes the ninth allergen that must be labeled on packaged foods and in-store bulk foods. It is the first new addition to the allergen list since 2004. The other allergens that must be declared are wheat, soy, fish, shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts, milk and egg.

The labeling requirement is met if the allergen's common name is in the product's ingredient list (e.g., sesame oil). Otherwise, the allergen must be declared in parentheses following the name of the ingredient or immediately after/adjacent to the ingredient list in a "Contains" statement (e.g., "Contains soy, sesame").

It is estimated that nearly 1.6 million Americans have a sesame allergy. Declaring sesame as an allergen on product labels is important as it can be present in products labeled as containing "natural flavors" or "natural spices" unbeknownst to many. Across the country, an estimated 32 million consumers—approximately 1 in 10 adults and 1 in 13 children—have food allergies.