



# Traveling to Canada With Food Allergies

Whether you're traveling to Canada for business or pleasure, being prepared and informed will help make your trip safe and enjoyable. This guide provides some helpful tips while in Canada, including information on food labels and dining out at restaurants.

## Before Traveling

### Medication

Bring a kit with all your medications, including extra epinephrine auto-injectors. [Food Allergy Canada](#), the Canadian organization that supports people living with food allergies, also recommends carrying an [Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan](#), which outlines recommended treatment in case of an allergic reaction and includes emergency contact information. [Download a copy of the plan](#), print a few extra copies and keep your plan in a place where others can find it. It's important that you and your travel companions understand what to do in case of an emergency.

Currently the only epinephrine (adrenaline) auto-injector available in Canada is [EpiPen®](#) which can be purchased in all provinces in pharmacies as a 'behind-the-counter' medication; a prescription is not required.

According to the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA), which regulates air travel in Canada, passengers are allowed to bring their auto-injectors on board the aircraft. Remember, you may need to show the printed label that identifies your auto-injector and you should also have your doctor complete a [travel plan](#) that confirms your food allergy and travel requirements. Download the [travel plan](#) developed by the International Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Alliance.

### Travel Health Insurance

Before traveling to Canada, you should also consider purchasing travel health insurance as you are not covered by provincial health insurance plans. As emergency care can be costly, be prepared and ensure you are covered prior to traveling.

## In Canada

### Emergencies

Always keep your auto-injectors with you so you can get to them quickly. Tell your travel companions about your allergies. Explain where your auto-injectors are located and how to use them.

In case of an emergency, follow the steps below:

- Use your auto-injector immediately; **don't delay**.
- **Dial 9-1-1 or local emergency services** to call for an ambulance to take you to the hospital. Be sure to inform the dispatcher on the phone that epinephrine may be needed.
- It is important to remain at the hospital for at least four hours for observation because symptoms may return.

When you arrive in Canada, familiarize yourself with the local emergency services phone number and find out where the nearest hospital is located. Check the provincial/territorial [Ministry of Health](#) for this information. When calling for emergency services, provide your specific location and address. If you are staying at a hotel or resort, ask about their emergency procedure, as some will instruct guests to contact security to ensure that emergency responders can quickly locate you in a large setting.

### Understanding Food Labels

Reading food labels on pre-packaged food is an important part of managing food allergies and avoiding your allergen. Health Canada regulates allergen food labelling in Canada under the [Food and Drug Regulations](#), which require that the ingredient label on pre-packaged food containing any of [Canada's priority food allergens](#) be in plain language.

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In Canada, the use of advisory labelling (i.e., precautionary statements such as "may contain") is voluntary and optional for manufacturers. There are no specific laws governing or requiring these statements. We recommend you call the manufacturer if you have any questions.

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#### Priority allergens must be identified on pre-packaged food labels

The priority food allergen will be in the ingredient list in parentheses.	Example: Albumin (egg)
The word "Contains" followed by the name of the priority food allergen will appear after the ingredient list.	Example: Contains milk, wheat



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## Top Priority Allergens in Canada

- eggs • milk • mustard • peanut • seafood (shellfish, fish, crustaceans) • sesame • soy •
- tree nuts (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts) •
- wheat • sulphites (food additive) •

Be aware that Canada's priority allergens may differ from other countries. For example, the European Union has identified 14 food allergens and the United States has 8 food allergens that must be declared on pre-packaged food labels. Food Allergy Canada advises consumers with food allergies to read all labels on all packages carefully, every time. [Learn more about how to read a food label in Canada.](#)

## Snacks and Meals

It is recommended that you travel with non-perishable food that is safe for you to eat in case you are unable to find suitable options while traveling. If you plan on staying in a hotel, consider staying in one that has a small kitchen in your room or a refrigerator and microwave so you can store and prepare safe meals and snacks. While you may be able to purchase some of the same products in Canada that are sold in your country, don't assume they are exactly the same – **read the label every time.**

## Dining Out at Restaurants

When you are dining out with food allergies, planning ahead is important. Consider choosing chain restaurants (e.g., restaurants under the same ownership, serving similar menu options at multiple locations). These types of restaurants are more likely to use the same ingredients and prepare foods the same way compared to independent restaurants.

Before you go to the restaurant, there are some steps you can take to see if a particular restaurant is a good choice for you. Many restaurants have websites and post their menus online for you to review ahead of time. You can also call the restaurant ahead of time and ask to speak to the chef or manager about your food allergies, menu items and meal preparation. We recommend calling during off-peak hours so that the chef or manager will be more available to speak with you.

Communication between restaurants and customers with food allergies is essential to a safe dining experience. Advise staff about your allergies when making a reservation and remind them again as soon as you arrive at the restaurant. Speak with both the wait staff and a manager about ingredients and preparation methods. It may be helpful to also present an **"allergy card"** that outlines the foods you must avoid when ordering. Allergy cards can be purchased for a small fee and downloaded in multiple languages at [www.allergytranslation.com/](http://www.allergytranslation.com/)

When selecting your meal, keep it simple. Ordering food with fewer ingredients is the safest option. Be sure to ask what is in your dish and how it is prepared. It's important that the restaurant understands what you are allergic to and takes steps to avoid cross-contact. If a member of the wait staff doesn't seem to understand, ask to speak with the manager or the chef.

Remember to check your food before you eat it, and always carry your epinephrine auto-injector with you at all times – don't eat if you don't have it with you!

For more tips on dining out, visit [foodallergycanada.ca](http://foodallergycanada.ca).

## Resources

Information as of Fall 2016

Food Allergy Canada: [foodallergycanada.ca](http://foodallergycanada.ca)

Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan: [foodallergycanada.ca/resources/emergency-forms/](http://foodallergycanada.ca/resources/emergency-forms/)

Auto-Injectors: [foodallergycanada.ca/about-allergies/emergency-treatment/](http://foodallergycanada.ca/about-allergies/emergency-treatment/) and [www.epipen.ca](http://www.epipen.ca)

Travel Plan: [foodallergy.org/about/faaalliance/travel-plan](http://foodallergy.org/about/faaalliance/travel-plan)

Provincial/Territorial Ministries of Health: [healthycanadians.gc.ca/health-system-systeme-sante/cards-cartes-eng.php](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/health-system-systeme-sante/cards-cartes-eng.php)

Food Allergen Labeling Regulations: [hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/allergen/index-eng.php](http://hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/allergen/index-eng.php)

Priority Food Allergens in Canada: [hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/fa-aa/index-eng.php](http://hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/fa-aa/index-eng.php)

Reading Food Labels: [foodallergycanada.ca/allergy-safety/food-labelling/](http://foodallergycanada.ca/allergy-safety/food-labelling/)

Allergy Cards: [www.allergytranslation.com/](http://www.allergytranslation.com/)

Dining Out: [foodallergycanada.ca/allergy-safety/dining-out/](http://foodallergycanada.ca/allergy-safety/dining-out/)