



Traveling to Germany With Food Allergies

Food allergies don't have to stop you from traveling. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, careful preparation and communication will help make your trip safe and enjoyable. This guide provides some helpful tips for traveling to Germany plus information on understanding food labels and dining out at restaurants.

Medication

Bring a kit with all your medications, including extra epinephrine auto-injectors (EAI). Deutsche Allergie- und Asthmabund e.V. (DAAB) also recommends carrying an Emergency Care Plan that outlines recommended treatment in case of an allergic reaction, is signed by a physician and includes emergency contact information. You can order a free copy of DAAB's Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Plan at info@daab.de. Be sure to bring extra copies with you and keep your plan in a place where others can find it. It is important that you and your travel companions understand what to do in case of an emergency.

Ask your doctor to write prescriptions that you can carry with you. Epinephrine auto-injectors available in Germany include Emerade® by Bausch&Lomb, Fastjekt® by Meda Pharma (identical to EpiPen®) and Jext® by ALK. Note that EAI in Germany typically come in single packs, so for two EAI you need two prescriptions. Only Fastjekt® is available in a two-pack.

Understand policies for carrying medication on board the aircraft. You are allowed to keep your epinephrine with you in the aircraft cabin. However, you may need to show the printed label that identifies the medication. It is recommended that you also show the prescription label from the pharmacy. Carry a Travel Plan completed by your doctor that confirms your food allergy and travel requirements. The Travel Plan of the International Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Alliance may be downloaded at foodallergy.org/travelplan. A copy of the German version can be ordered for free at info@daab.de.

Emergencies

ADMINISTER EPINEPHRINE AND DIAL 1-1-2

Always keep your epinephrine with you and easily accessible. Let your travel companions know about your allergies so they know what to do in case of an emergency and where your auto-injectors are located.

In the event of an emergency, administer epinephrine immediately. It is critical not to delay administering epinephrine. Next, contact emergency services by calling 1-1-2. Always call 1-1-2; never drive to a hospital on your own. Be aware of your location so that you can give the dispatcher specific information. Use the words "anaphylactic shock" ("Anaphylaktischer Schock") when reporting the reaction so that an emergency physician will be called to come to you. Ambulances in Germany arrive within 15 minutes at the latest.

In Germany, ambulances carry epinephrine (Adrenalin), but not necessarily auto-injectors. Administration of Adrenalin is carried out by Emergency physicians, who arrive separately in a "fly-car" when you inform the dispatcher about the anaphylactic reaction. The separately arriving ambulance will transport you to the closest hospital emergency department. It is important to remain at the hospital for at least four hours of observation because symptoms may return.

For reimbursement of emergency medical costs, it might be helpful to purchase travel insurance prior to coming to Germany.

Understanding German (EU) Food Labels

Reading food labels on packaged (prepacked) food is an important part of managing food allergies and avoiding your allergen. EU and German federal law, the **Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers (FIR/ Reg. (EU) 1169/2011)**, requires that 14 major substances causing food allergies or hypersensitivities be labeled whenever they, or ingredients made from them, are present in prepacked foods (including alcoholic drinks) or non-prepacked foods. These 14 labeled allergens are cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, eggs, fish, mollusks, nuts, peanuts, soybeans, milk, celery, mustard, sesame, lupin and sulphur dioxide or sulphites exceeding 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/liter, expressed as SO₂.

In Germany the use of advisory labeling (i.e., precautionary statements such as "may contain," "processed in a facility that also processes," or "made on equipment with") is voluntary and optional for manufacturers. There are no laws governing or requiring these statements, so they may or may not indicate if a product contains a specific allergen.

The top 14 allergens in Germany/EU must always be identified in the ingredient list:

There must be a clear reference to the name of the substance or product that causes the food allergy or food hypersensitivity	Example: "albumin (egg)", "wheat-flour", "E 322 (soy)"
The allergenic ingredient must be emphasized through a typeset that clearly distinguishes it from the rest of the list of ingredients, for example by means of the font, style or background color	Example: "Milkpowder", "wheat-flour", "Peanutoil";



Please be aware that labeling laws may differ in other countries. For example, the U.S. has identified 8 allergens that must be declared on prepacked food labels, and in Canada, 10 major allergens have been identified.

In Germany/EU, the 14 allergenic food substances and all products thereof (such as flours and oils) must be labelled unless explicitly exempted from the regulation (e.g., cereals used to make distilled alcohol, fully refined soy oil). Note that in Germany/EU, allergen labelling is mandated for 8 tree nuts: almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut, and macadamia or Queensland nut.

Although FIR has made label reading easier, DAAB advises those managing food allergies to read all labels on all packages carefully, every time.

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 allergen-free foods while traveling. Good options include dried pasta and snack bars that are free of your allergen. If you plan on staying in a hotel, consider staying in one that has a small kitchen or a refrigerator and microwave to store and prepare safe meals and snacks. Thoroughly clean work areas, surfaces, utensils and equipment before first use. You may be able to purchase some of the same products in Germany as you can back home, but remember that the same product manufactured in different countries may contain different ingredients.

Dining Out at Restaurants

Since December 2014, FIR requires that food business operators (bakeries, butchers, confectioners, ice cream parlors, restaurants, hotels, clinics, etc.) provide allergen information for ingredients in non-prepacked food as well. Each member state had the option to choose how this information is provided. In Germany, allergen information can be provided either in writing (e.g., on a sign next to the food, in the menu, on a board, in a folder, or on a form) or orally. If allergen information is provided orally, written documentation must be easily accessible on request. DAAB advises consumers with food allergies always to ask for written allergen information.

Regardless of the new law, DAAB advises to plan ahead when dining out with food allergies, since many places are not aware of the new law, and implementation of the law will take time. Consider choosing chain restaurants. Each restaurant is likely to use the same ingredients and prepare foods the same way, and they are usually more allergy-aware. 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. Some restaurants have websites and post their menus online for you to review ahead of time. You can also call the restaurant 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.

Communication between restaurants and customers with food allergies is essential to a safe dining experience. The restaurant manager and wait staff should know about your food allergy. Remind a manager or the head waiter about your allergies before you are seated. In addition to asking questions about the ingredients and preparation methods, carry a “**chef card**” that outlines the foods you must avoid. Present the card to the chef or manager for review. Chef cards in German for 14 allergens can be ordered for free at info@daab.de.

When selecting your meal, keep it simple. If you have to ask complicated questions about the items on a menu, simple fare may be the safest. Be sure to ask what is in your dish and how is it prepared. It is important that the restaurant understands what you are allergic to and takes steps to avoid cross-contact. You may want to speak to the manager and the chef, just to be sure.

Remember, never be embarrassed if you feel you are not communicating effectively. If you think a member of the wait staff does not understand your situation, always trust your instincts and seek out another staff member or manager. Sometimes, the safest choice is to avoid eating, and find a safe meal somewhere else.



Resources

Order Free German-language Resources at info@daab.de. Includes Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Plan, How to Read a Food Label, and 14 German-language chef cards.

International Travel Plan: foodallergy.org/travelplan