



# Traveling to Mexico 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 Mexico as well as information on understanding food labels and dining out at restaurants.

## Medication

### **EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR SALE IN MEXICO**

Bring a kit with all your medications, including extra epinephrine auto-injectors. Since auto-injectors are not sold in Mexico, you should bring more than one extra auto-injector from your country.

Carry 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 download a Spanish-language version of FARE's Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan at [foodallergy.org/faap](http://foodallergy.org/faap). 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.

According to Mexico's General Directorate of Civil Aviation (DGAC) and Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (SCT), you may carry without restrictions on board the aircraft as many medications as you will need during your trip. 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. Products for people with special dietary restrictions and tanks for medically required oxygen are also permitted, as are milk, juice, and baby food if you are flying with a baby. You should also have your doctor complete a Travel Plan 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](http://foodallergy.org/travelplan).

## Emergencies

### **ADMINISTER EPINEPHRINE AND DIAL 9-1-1**

Always keep your epinephrine with you and easily accessible in the event of an emergency. 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 for ambulance transport to the hospital emergency department by calling **9-1-1**. Not all ambulances are equipped with epinephrine, so be sure to inform the dispatcher that epinephrine may be needed. It is important to remain at the hospital for at least four hours of observation because symptoms may return.

Familiarize yourself with the local emergency services phone number and dialing procedures. For example, some hotels may have specific procedures for dialing 9-1-1 from your room. Be aware of your location so that you can give the dispatcher specific information. Also, familiarize yourself with where the nearest emergency department is located. To find an emergency department near where you'll be traveling, visit [portal.salud.gob.mx/contenidos/hospitales/hospitales.html](http://portal.salud.gob.mx/contenidos/hospitales/hospitales.html).

If you currently live in a country with public/universal health care, you may want to purchase insurance prior to coming to Mexico. Emergency care can be costly, and you should be able to access funds while abroad.

## Understanding Food Labels in Mexico

Reading food labels on packaged food is an important part of managing food allergies and avoiding your allergen. Federal law in Mexico (Norma Oficial Mexicana NOM-051-SCFI/SSA1-2010), requires that foods and non-alcoholic drinks (less than 2 percent ethanol) containing nine major food allergens must name the allergen on the label. However, even though allergen labeling is mandatory, many products do not make an appropriate declaration.

- cereals containing gluten and derived products • crustaceans and their products • egg and egg products •
- fish and fish products • peanut and peanut products • soy and soy products (except soybean oil) •
- milk and dairy products • tree nuts and derivatives • sulfites in concentrations above 10 mg/kg •



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Please be aware that Mexico's nine labeled allergens may differ from the allergens labeled in other countries. For example, the European Union has identified 14 allergens that must be declared on pre-packaged food labels, and Canada has identified 10 major allergens. Remember to read all labels on all packages carefully every time. For a one-sheet guide on how to read food labels please visit, [foodallergy.org/foodlabels](http://foodallergy.org/foodlabels).

## 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 all utensils, equipment, and surfaces before first use. You may be able to purchase some of the same products in Mexico as you can back home, but remember that the same product manufactured in different countries can contain different ingredients.

## Dining Out at Restaurants

When you are dining out with food allergies, planning ahead is important. Consider choosing chain restaurants. Each restaurant is likely to use the same ingredients and prepare foods the same way, and a growing number are 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. Many 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 can be downloaded in English and nine other languages, including Spanish, at [foodallergy.org/diningout](http://foodallergy.org/diningout).

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 it is 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

Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan [foodallergy.org/faap](http://foodallergy.org/faap)

Find an Emergency Department: [portal.salud.gob.mx/contenidos/hospitales/hospitales.html](http://portal.salud.gob.mx/contenidos/hospitales/hospitales.html)

Reading Food Labels: [foodallergy.org/foodlabels](http://foodallergy.org/foodlabels)

International Travel Plan: [foodallergy.org/travelplan](http://foodallergy.org/travelplan)



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