



Traveling to the U.S. 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 the U.S., plus information on understanding food labels and dining out at restaurants.

Medication

Bring a kit with all your medications, including extra epinephrine auto-injectors. FARE 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 download a copy of FARE's Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan at 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.

Ask your doctor to write prescriptions that you can carry with you. Epinephrine auto-injectors available in the U.S. include Adrenaclick®/Generic Epinephrine Auto-Injector and EpiPen®.

Understand policies for carrying medication on board the aircraft. According to the Transportation Security Agency (TSA), which handles airport security in the U.S., 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 with you 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.

Emergencies

ADMINISTER EPINEPHRINE AND DIAL 9-1-1

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 9-1-1 to request ambulance transport to a hospital emergency department. Not all U.S. ambulances are equipped with epinephrine. Be sure to inform the dispatcher that someone is experiencing an allergic reaction and needs an ambulance that carries epinephrine and emergency responders who are authorized to use epinephrine. 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. Contact information for nearby hospitals may be available at ushospitalfinder.com/. Not all U.S. hospitals have emergency departments, so you should contact the hospital to confirm that emergency care is available. If you currently live in a country with public/universal health care you may want to purchase insurance prior to arrival. U.S. emergency care can be costly. You should be able to access funds while abroad.

Understanding U.S. Food Labels

Reading food labels on packaged food is an important part of managing food allergies and avoiding your allergen. A U.S. federal law, the **Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA)**, requires that foods containing one or more of the "Top 8" major food allergens (including conventional foods, dietary supplements, infant formula and medical foods) must name the allergen(s) in plain language.

The Top 8 Allergens must be identified either in the ingredient list or via:	
The word "Contains" followed by the name of the major food allergen	Example: "Contains milk, wheat"
In the ingredient list in parentheses	Example: "albumin (egg)"

In the U.S. 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.



foodallergy.org



Please be aware that the Top 8 major allergens are the most common allergens in the U.S. and that labeling laws differ in other countries. For example, the European Union has identified 14 allergens that must be declared on food labels, and Canada has identified 10 major allergens.

Although FALCPA has made label reading easier, FARE advises those managing food allergies 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.

Snacks and Meals

FARE recommends traveling with non-perishable food that is safe for you to eat, in case you are unable to find allergen-free food while traveling. Good options include uncooked pasta and snack bars that are free of your allergen. If you plan to stay 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 the U.S. 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 in English and nine other languages can be downloaded at 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 is it prepared. It is important for restaurant staff to understand what you are allergic to and take 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

Epinephrine Auto-Injectors: foodallergy.org/epinephrine

Finding an Emergency Department: ushospitalfinder.com/

Reading Food Labels: foodallergy.org/foodlabels

Dining Out: foodallergy.org/diningout

International Travel Plan: foodallergy.org/travelplan