

## Would you like better food labelling?

*Help us pass new legislation. Write to Health Canada.*

Over the last seven years, Anaphylaxis Canada, other food allergy consumer organizations, the food industry and Health Canada have been consulting on amendments to Canada's *Food and Drug Regulations*, which regulate the labelling of priority allergens on food packages.

Health Canada has worked through the fine print on these proposed amendments to ensure that all allergens are fully and clearly labelled on prepackaged foods. The amendments are ready to move forward into law – but the process appears to have stalled.

At present, manufacturers and importers follow only a set of guidelines for allergen labelling that are subject to interpretation. Making these guidelines into law will clarify the labelling requirements and will help the Canadian Food Inspection Agency with enforcement of both domestic and imported foods.

Even more importantly, these amendments will ensure that consumers have the information needed to make safe food choices in the marketplace. Although there are a number of changes in the legislation, these are three primary revisions:

- **Listing priority allergens by their common names.** As one example, milk sometimes appears on the label as casein or whey; with new legislation, it will need to appear as **whey (milk)**. Consumers are not food scientists. Reading labels shouldn't require a detailed knowledge of the alternate names for food components. This use of different terminology can be challenging.
- **Removing some existing exemptions.** As one example, foods that are used as an ingredient in another food (such as margarine in a cake mix) don't currently need to list their component ingredients. The ingredient label on the cake mix may simply say "margarine", and not indicate that milk or soy or other ingredients are part of the margarine. Under the new legislation, all priority allergens present in these exempted foods will need to be declared on the label. (Note: Some food will remain exempt from labelling laws, such as products from vending machines and bulk foods.)
- **Identifying the plant or animal source in the common name of all hydrolyzed proteins, starches, or lecithins.** As one example, hydrolyzed protein is often made from soy or wheat, but the plant source is not required to be on the label. Many people currently avoid products with these ingredients because they don't know the source. Under the new legislation, the plant source will need to be declared.

### **Make your voice heard!**

**We need your help to urge Health Canada to pass the amendments.  
Our sample letter offers some of the points you might want to make.**

The Honourable Tony Clement  
Minister of Health  
Minister's Office - Health Canada  
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture  
Postal Locator: 0906C  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0K9

Dear Mr. Clement,

I am writing to urge you to pass ***The Proposed Regulatory Amendments to Enhance the Labelling of Priority Allergens in Foods.***

My child has a food allergy which is potentially life-threatening. I understand that Health Canada's proposed amendments to Canada's *Food and Drug Regulations* are designed to make allergen labelling on foods clearer and more complete.

There is no cure for food allergy. My child's safety depends on the safety of the food he eats. We must choose our food very carefully, and rely on the government to ensure that the foods we buy in the grocery store list all of the priority allergens accurately on the labels.

This proposed legislation has been in development for more than seven years. It is time to make these amendments into the law. **Please do not allow this to be delayed any longer.**

Sincerely,

Cc Mr. Morris Rosenberg, Deputy Minister of Health (*address is below*)  
Your Member of Parliament

*Please enclose a letter by your child. This helps to put a human face to the issue. Also, send a copy of your letter to Anaphylaxis Canada.*

Mr. Morris Rosenberg  
Deputy Minister's Office - Health Canada  
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture  
Postal Locator: 0906C  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Anaphylaxis Canada  
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Suite 800  
Toronto, Ontario M2J 5B4

### **Are “may contain” and “free from” claims part of the new law?**

No. Precautionary statements (“may contain”) and allergen-free (e.g., “peanut free”) claims are currently voluntary statements used at the discretion of the manufacturers. We need clearer definitions for these terms as well as industry standards that outline the criteria.

Health Canada will be consulting with industry and other stakeholders about this issue. We need definitions which are both clearly understood by consumers and realistic for the food industry. Ultimately, the goal is to put clear definitions into the food labelling guidelines.