

Sulphite Sensitivity

In addition to the general information about food allergies, here are some issues that people with a sulphite sensitivity should know about.

Allergy or sensitivity

True allergic reactions only occur after exposure to an allergenic protein. Since sulphites are not proteins, a reaction to sulphites is not due to an allergy but to a sensitivity. Regardless, a sulphite-sensitive person may experience the same life-threatening symptoms during a reaction to sulphites as occurs during an allergic reaction.

Where sulphites are used

Sulphites are added to some processed foods to maintain colour, prolong shelf life and prevent the growth of microorganisms. Sulphites are also sometimes used to bleach food starches and are used in the production of some packaging materials, such as cellophane. The use of sulphites in food is regulated under Canadian law.

Read the Labels

If you're sensitive to sulphites, the only way to avoid a reaction is to avoid all food and products that contain sulphites and sulphites derivatives. Don't eat a food or product if the label has precautionary statements such as "may contain sulphites". Read ingredient lists carefully and learn to identify other names for sulphites, such as potassium bisulphite. Do not consume a food or product if there is no ingredient list or if there is a risk they might have been in contact with sulphites. If there is not enough information to make a decision, you can always call to ask the company or speak to a knowledgeable person at a restaurant.



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Sources of sulphite

Other names for sulphites

E 220, E 221, E 222, E 223, E 224, E 225, E 226,
E 227, E 228 (European names)

Potassium bisulphite or metabisulphite

Sodium bisulphite, dithionite, metabisulphite or sulphite

Sulphur dioxide

Sulphiting agents

Sulphurous acid

Food and products that often contain sulphites

Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beer and cider

Bottled lemon and lime juices and concentrates

Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables

Cereal, cornmeal, cornstarch, crackers and muesli

Condiments, for example, coleslaw, horseradish, ketchup, mustard, pickles, relish and sauerkraut

Dehydrated, mashed, peeled and pre-cut potatoes, and frozen french fries

Dried fruits and vegetables, such as apricots, coconut and raisins, sweet potato

Dried herbs, spices and teas

Fresh grapes

Fruit fillings and syrups, gelatin, jams, jellies, preserves, marmalade, molasses and pectin

Fruit and vegetable juices

Glazed and glacéed fruits, for example, maraschino cherries

Starches, for example, corn starch, potato starch

Sugar syrups, for example, glucose, glucose solids, syrup dextrose, corn syrup, table syrup

Tomato pastes, pulps and purees

Vinegar and wine vinegar

Wine



Other possible sources of sulphites

Baked goods, especially with dried fruits

Deli meats, hot dogs and sausages

Dressings, gravies, guacamole, sauces, soups and soup mixes

Fish, crustaceans and shellfish

Granola bars, especially with dried fruit

Noodle and rice mixes

Snack foods, for example, raisins, fruit salad

Soy products

Non-food sources of sulphites

Bottle-sanitizing solutions for home brewing

Cellophane