

Sesame

Sesame seeds are small oval seeds that are edible and can yield oil. The seeds are creamy white or charcoal black in color.

Other names for sesame seeds:

- Benne, benne seed, benniseed, Gingelly, gingelly oil, Seeds, Sesamol, sesamolina, Sesamum indicum, Sim sim, Tahini, Tahina, Til, Vegetable oil

Possible sources of sesame seeds:

- Baked goods, e.g., hamburger buns, multi-grain breads & bagels, Bread crumbs, bread sticks, cereals, crackers, melba toast, muesli, Dips, patés, spreads such as hummus, Dressings, gravies, marinades, salads, sauces, soups, Ethnic foods such as flavoured rice, noodles, shish kebabs, stews and stir fry, Flavour(ing), Herbs, seasoning, spice, Margarine, Processed meats, sausages, Risotto (rice dish), Sesame oil, sesame salt, Snack foods e.g., bagel chips, pita chips, pretzels, rice cakes, sesame snap bars, candy, Halvah, Tahini, Tempeh, Vegetarian burgers.

Non-food sources of sesame seeds:

- Adhesive bandages, Cosmetics, hair care products, perfumes, soaps, sun screens, Drugs, Fungicides, insecticides, Lubricants, ointments, tropical oils, Pet food, Sesame meal in poultry and livestock feed

Doctors have found a steady and significant increase in the number of reports of allergic reactions to sesame over the past decades. While the European Commission (EC) and Canada have added sesame to the list of major food allergens for food labelling purposes, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not include sesame in its list of allergy-causing foods for labelling purposes.

Sesame seeds and sesame seed oil are used in the food industry (primarily in the baking industry) as well as in the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries.

Doctors monitored published reports of allergic reactions to sesame products from 1950 (the first documented case of an allergic reaction to sesame) to the present. They noted that a study of Australian children showed that allergic reactions to sesame ranked fourth behind reactions to egg, milk, and peanuts, and sesame was the third most common allergy-inducing food in Israeli children. Sesame products in cosmetics and ointments have been reported to cause allergic dermatitis, an inflammatory condition of the skin. Workers in the baking industry have also developed allergic reactions (including asthma) to sesame products. Fatal anaphylactic reactions (severe reactions that include swelling of the airways and difficulty breathing) have also occurred with sesame.

Food allergies are not uncommon in the general population, with up to four per cent of U.S. adults affected by this condition. Food allergies are slightly more common in infants and toddlers than in adults. It is possible to develop a food allergy at any time in life, even to foods that have been previously eaten without problems. Although people can become allergic to almost any food product, common food triggers for allergic reactions in Americans include milk, eggs, tree nuts, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, and shellfish. Common food allergy symptoms include:

- hives, itching, nausea, vomiting, and Abdominal pain.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may vary from a mild, itchy rash to a severe, potentially fatal anaphylactic reaction.

While the number of reports of sesame allergy has steadily increased, it remains unclear whether this represents an actual increase in the number of reactions or an increased rate of detection and reporting of these allergic reactions.

