

NIGHTSHADES

Nightshades are a group of vegetables that belong to the Solanaceae family. More than 3,000 species of plants belong to this group. Common varieties are aubergines, tomatoes (all varieties and tomato products) potatoes (red and white), peppers (bell, jalapeno, chilli) and spices such as curry powder, chilli powder, paprika red pepper flakes and cayenne.

Some people can have an allergy or an intolerance to nightshade vegetables, however there is limited data to show how many people are affected but having a reaction to nightshades is believed to be quite rare.

REACTIONS TO NIGHTSHADES

- A nightshade allergy is an immune response to the compound in nightshade plants called **glycoalkaloids**. These compounds are found in a concentrated form in the skins of vegetables such as potatoes and aubergines, but it is a natural compound produced by all nightshade plants. Nightshades are a common food in our diet and it is important to understand the effects they can have on someone with an allergy as the reactions can be severe and potentially cause anaphylaxis.
- The most common symptoms of a nightshade allergy include congestion, skin rashes, itching, bloating, redness and digestive issues.
- Those who are intolerant to nightshades can experience severe heartburn and digestive issues which may begin within 30 minutes of eating the food, but in some cases, symptoms can take up to 48 hours to appear.
- There have been claims that nightshade vegetables contribute to inflammation and are therefore unsuitable for people living with conditions such as arthritis, lupus and cancer. These vegetables also contain solanine, which is toxic in high concentrations and can aggravate arthritic pain and joint inflammation.
- It can sometimes be difficult to tell whether a spice is causing an allergic reaction or if the person concerned is experiencing a physiological response to the spice itself. Chilli can cause the eyes to water and mouth to burn because of the chemicals in the spice which can irritate the mucous membranes of the nose and mouth and the physiological response is immediate.
- With a spice allergy, there may be other symptoms such as swelling of the lips, nasal congestion, hives and diarrhoea. Some people may experience shortness of breath or develop a rash where the spice has come into contact with their skin and this is known as contact dermatitis.
- Some people need to avoid foods with small seeds, such as tomatoes, as these can aggravate Diverticulitis symptoms.

NIGHTSHADE ALTERNATIVES

Substitute: -

- Cauliflower and sweet potatoes for white potatoes
- Mushrooms for aubergine
- Radishes, courgettes or celery for bell peppers
- Carrots or beets for tomatoes
- Ground white pepper or black pepper for spices such as cayenne and paprika
- Sweet potatoes and yams are not nightshades

THE NIGHTSHADE FAMILY

- There are a large proportion of nightshades which are NOT edible, and many are poisonous if eaten.
- They also vary hugely in their shape, size and structure, but all nightshades are genetically similar.
- The nightshade family includes deadly inedible plants such as ***tobacco, belladonna and mandrake***.

NIGHTSHADE ALERT!

Nightshades and products made from them are very common additives in our diet.

For example: Potato starch also known as **maltodextrin** is a common thickening agent and is found in sauces, salad dressings, marinades and processed foods. Paprika is sometimes used in food colouring and marinades as well as many seasonings. **Always** read the label on any mixed spice ingredients.

<https://foodallergyaware.co.uk/resources/factsheets/>