

Fish and Shellfish Allergy

Seafood is used as a collective term that includes both fish and shellfish. Shellfish, as a category, is further divided into crustaceans and molluscs. Fish, crustaceans and molluscs contain three different types of protein and it is the protein that causes the allergic reaction. Usually people who react to one type of shellfish, such as crab, are likely to react to other members of the same group, in this case other crustaceans. This is because the allergy inducing shellfish proteins are very similar. Molluscs may not necessarily be a problem to someone with an allergy to crustaceans, and vice versa, but it is usually best to avoid all shellfish as there is a relatively high risk of cross-contamination.

Fish:- Vertebrates(they have a backbone) and most fish are covered in scales and have fins.

- e.g. Anchovy, Cod, Sea Bass, Trout, Eel, Tuna, Plaice, Haddock, Salmon, Mackerel

Crustaceans:- Invertebrates (they have no backbone) and have segmented bodies and jointed legs.

- e.g. Crab, Lobster, Shrimp, Crayfish, Prawn, Scampi

Molluscs:- They are soft bodied, usually in a shell. Some have a hinged shell and are known as "bivalves "

- e.g. Abalone, Octopus, Snail, Clam, Cockle, Scallops, Mussels, Whelks, Oysters

Fish and Shellfish- Allergic Symptoms

- An allergic reaction to seafood can be mild or moderate (swollen lips, face or eyes, itching, tingling mouth, abdominal pain, or vomiting) and/or severe (breathing difficulties, dizziness or collapse).
- It has the potential to cause **anaphylaxis** which is the most serious form of an allergic reaction
- Scombroid fish poisoning, also** known as Histamine Fish poisoning, occurs when fish that has been poorly handled or refrigerated is eaten. The symptoms can mimic an allergic reaction and mild symptoms can be treated with antihistamines. Dark-fleshed fish such as tuna or mackerel are fairly common culprits.

Fish and Shellfish in the Diet

- Asian foods may contain fish or shellfish mixed with other foods, such as **fried rice**, which may not be mentioned in the menu description. Fish or shellfish stock may also be used as is fish sauce (**Nam Pla**)
- Oyster sauce** is used to flavour savoury dishes such as stir fries and chow mein
- Rice based dishes such as **paella**, fried rice and **sushi rolls** may contain fish or shellfish
- Stews, soups or casseroles such as **bouillabaisse** may contain mixed fish
- Dips such as **taramasalata** (smoked cod's roe) and **Caviar** (fish eggs) are often served
- Caesar salad** traditionally contains anchovy in the dressing or as a garnish. **Salad Nicoise** will also have anchovies in its composition
- Pizza toppings** could include tuna, prawns anchovy calamari and mussels
- Worcestershire sauce** which is added to many different stews and casseroles does traditionally contain anchovies

NOTE:

- Foods cooked in the same batter or oil as fish or shellfish can be a source of cross contamination
- Fish and shellfish allergens can become airborne in cooking vapours especially in cooking methods such as steaming e.g. **Moules Mariniere**

Read all labels carefully and ask questions about the ingredients in prepared foods.

Seafood Allergy

- One of the most common allergies in adults but an allergy to shellfish is rare in young children and is not usually seen until the teens or adulthood.
- It may develop at any point in a person's life
- It can be caused by a fish or shellfish that has been eaten before with no previous signs of a food allergy
- An allergy to either fish or shellfish is likely to be lifelong and is very rarely outgrown
- Men in their fifties are most likely to develop a shellfish allergy

Non Food products which can contain fish and shellfish.

Fish and shellfish could also be found in cosmetics, skincare products, shampoos and hair thickeners, and biodegradable drinking straws, which may also be made from chitosan the outer coating of a shellfish.

Glucosamine which is linked to joint health and may be taken as a supplement by those suffering from arthritis can also be derived from chitosan. Additionally, **chondroitin** originating from shark cartilage may also be added to these supplements.

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

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