

Salicylate Sensitivity

Salicylates are chemicals that can be found in fruits and vegetables and also in some medications and beauty products. Some people are sensitive to salicylates and will experience symptoms when consuming them. People with asthma are the most likely to have salicylate sensitivity. Salicylates may increase their asthma symptoms or trigger an asthma attack. Other symptoms may include:

- Hives
- Tissue swelling (angioedema)
- Respiratory symptoms such as nasal congestion
- Digestive tract upset

The amount of salicylates that can trigger a reaction varies from person to person. If your health care team thinks you might be sensitive to salicylates, a salicylate-restricted diet for a trial period, usually 4 weeks, may be advised.

Salicylates occur naturally in many foods. The levels of salicylates are difficult to determine, however. Laboratories have had differing results on levels of salicylates in foods. Therefore, it is not possible to definitely say which foods must be avoided and which foods are safe for every salicylate-sensitive person. It is usually enough for you to avoid those with the highest levels. In general:

- Most fruits, especially berries and dried fruits, contain salicylate.
- Vegetables show a wide range of salicylate levels.
- Some herbs and spices contain very high amounts of salicylate, especially curry powder, paprika, thyme, garam masala, aniseed (anise), and rosemary.
- Some types of tea provide substantial amounts of salicylate.
- Licorice and peppermint candies and some honeys contain salicylates.
- Cereals, meat, fish, and dairy products contain none or negligible amounts.

Anyone who is sensitive to salicylates will react to aspirin, because aspirin contains a much higher level of salicylate than any food. But aspirin-sensitive individuals may not require a salicylate-restricted diet. The level of salicylate in aspirin is significantly higher than most diets, so food restrictions are generally not necessary.

Food Choices for a Salicylate-Restricted Diet



The following diet restricts the foods most often reported to have the highest levels of salicylates and provides suggestions for low-salicylate substitutes.

No salicylates have been detected in foods marked with an asterisk (*). Not all brands of all foods and beverages have been analyzed for their salicylate content. These lists are based on available data. Where a product is named, that specific product has been analyzed.

Milk and Dairy Products

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Additive-free ice cream made without fruits on “restricted” list
- ✓ Butter
- ✓ Buttermilk
- ✓ Cheese of all types
- ✓ Cream
- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Sour cream
- ✓ Yogurt

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Ice cream and frozen treats with fruits on “restricted” list
- ⊘ Yogurt with fruits on “restricted” list

Grain Foods

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ General Foods Minute Rice
- ✓ Homemade crackers, cereals, and pasta dishes without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ✓ Homemade or purchased baked cookies, pies, cakes, and muffins without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ✓ Plain bread, buns, biscuits, and pizza dough
- ✓ Plain crackers such as Grissol Melba Toast, RyVita, Rye-Krisp, or Wasa Light
- ✓ Plain flours
- ✓ Plain grains and their flakes
- ✓ Plain pasta
- ✓ Plain rice (all kinds)
- ✓ Prepared plain breakfast cereals, such as oats and oatmeal, Red River Cereal, plain oat bran, and cream of wheat

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Baked products with ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ⊘ Pasta or rice dinners with complex ingredients that include vegetables, herbs, or spices on the “restricted” lists

SAMPLE

Vegetables

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Bamboo shoots, canned*
- ✓ Bean sprouts
- ✓ Brussels sprouts, fresh
- ✓ Cabbage, green, fresh*
- ✓ Cabbage, red, fresh
- ✓ Carrots, fresh
- ✓ Cauliflower, fresh
- ✓ Celery, fresh*
- ✓ Chayote squash
- ✓ Corn on the cob
- ✓ Corn niblets, canned
- ✓ Green beans, fresh
- ✓ Green peas, fresh
- ✓ Leeks, fresh
- ✓ Lettuce
- ✓ Mushrooms, fresh
- ✓ Onion, fresh
- ✓ Potato, white, peeled, fresh
- ✓ Pumpkin, fresh
- ✓ Shallots, fresh
- ✓ Spinach, frozen
- ✓ Tomato, fresh
- ✓ Turnip, fresh
- ✓ Watercress, fresh

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ All others, especially gherkins, cucumber, black or green olives, endive, potato skins, and sweet potatoes
- ⊘ Canned, bottled, and prepared vegetables with added restricted ingredients, such as tomato paste, ketchup, tomato sauce, and spaghetti sauce

Fruit

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Apple, golden delicious
- ✓ Banana, fresh*
- ✓ Figs, fresh*
- ✓ Figs, kadota, canned
- ✓ Lemon, fresh
- ✓ Mango, fresh
- ✓ Papaya (pawpaw), fresh
- ✓ Passion fruit (granadilla)
- ✓ Pear, Bartlett, canned*
- ✓ Pear, Packham, peeled, fresh*
- ✓ Pomegranate, fresh
- ✓ Rhubarb, fresh

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ All others, especially berries, pineapple, cherry, and apricot
- ⊘ Dried fruit, such as raisins, currants, and dates

Meat, Poultry, and Fish

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Plain fresh, frozen, or canned meat, poultry, or fish
- ✓ Processed meat made without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Any meat, poultry, or fish prepared with ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists

Eggs

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Plain eggs
- ✓ Egg dishes without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Any egg dishes prepared with ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists

Legumes (Beans, Peas, Lentils, Peanuts)

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Black-eyed peas*
- ✓ Brown beans*
- ✓ Brown lentils*
- ✓ Chickpeas (garbanzos)*
- ✓ Green split peas*
- ✓ Lima beans*
- ✓ Mung beans*
- ✓ Peanuts
- ✓ Plain, natural peanut butter
- ✓ Red lentils*
- ✓ Soybeans*
- ✓ Yellow split peas

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Fava (broad) beans
- ⊘ Any others not on the “allowed” list

Nuts and Seeds

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Cashews, fresh
- ✓ Hazelnuts, fresh
- ✓ Pecans, fresh
- ✓ Polly seed, dry*
- ✓ Sesame seeds, dry
- ✓ Sunflower seeds, dry

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Almonds
- ⊘ Brazil nuts
- ⊘ Coconut
- ⊘ Macadamia nuts
- ⊘ Pine nuts
- ⊘ Pistachios
- ⊘ Walnuts
- ⊘ Water chestnuts

Fats and Oils

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Homemade gravy without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ✓ Homemade salad dressings without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ✓ Lard and meat drippings
- ✓ Margarines
- ✓ Plain butter, cream, shortening, and vegetable oils (such as canola, corn, olive, sunflower, soy, and peanut)

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Commercial gravies and sauces
- ⊘ Commercial salad dressings

Sweets and Sweeteners

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Baking chocolate
- ✓ Confectioner’s sugar
- ✓ Corn syrup
- ✓ Homemade candies and sweets without ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ✓ Maple syrup
- ✓ Molasses
- ✓ Plain artificial sweeteners
- ✓ Plain jams, jellies, marmalades, and preserves made without fruits on the “restricted” list and without added color or flavor
- ✓ Pure cocoa
- ✓ Sugar

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Candied fruit
- ⊘ Commercial candies
- ⊘ Flavored syrups
- ⊘ Fruit peel
- ⊘ Fruit snacks (such as Fruit Roll-Ups or Fun Fruits)
- ⊘ Honey
- ⊘ Licorice
- ⊘ Pastries with ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ⊘ Peppermints
- ⊘ Prepared dessert fillings made with restricted fruit or other ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists
- ⊘ Spreads with restricted herbs and spices or other ingredients on any of the “restricted” lists

Spices and Herbs

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Allspice, dry powder
- ✓ Bay leaf, dry leaf
- ✓ Caraway, dry
- ✓ Cardamom, dry powder
- ✓ Chili, powder and flakes
- ✓ Chili peppers, green, red, and yellow, fresh
- ✓ Chives, fresh
- ✓ Cloves, whole, dry
- ✓ Coriander, fresh leaves
- ✓ Fennel, dry powder
- ✓ Garlic, fresh bulbs
- ✓ Ginger root, fresh
- ✓ Horseradish
- ✓ Nutmeg, dry powder
- ✓ Parsley
- ✓ Pepper, black and white, dry powders
- ✓ Poppy seed
- ✓ Saffron

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Aniseed
- ⊘ Any product labeled with “spices”
- ⊘ Basil
- ⊘ Cayenne
- ⊘ Celery seed
- ⊘ Cinnamon
- ⊘ Cumin
- ⊘ Curry powder
- ⊘ Dill
- ⊘ Fenugreek
- ⊘ Flavoring extracts
- ⊘ Flavoring packets
- ⊘ Garam masala
- ⊘ Licorice
- ⊘ Mace
- ⊘ Marjoram
- ⊘ Mint
- ⊘ Mustard
- ⊘ Oregano
- ⊘ Paprika
- ⊘ Rosemary
- ⊘ Sage
- ⊘ Seasoning salts
- ⊘ Sesame seed
- ⊘ Tarragon
- ⊘ Thyme
- ⊘ Turmeric

Beverages

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Alcohol*: sherry, dry vermouth, Hennessy Brandy, Smirnoff Vodka, Johnnie Walker whiskey, and Gilbey's Gin
- ✓ Chamomile herbal tea*
- ✓ Ovaltine powder*
- ✓ Plain and carbonated mineral water
- ✓ Plain coffee
- ✓ Tetley tea
- ✓ Twinings teas: lemon-scented, Irish breakfast, English breakfast, orange pekoe, Indian tea, Burmese tea, green tea, jasmine tea, and rosehip herbal tea

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ Any carbonated drinks and soft drinks not on the "allowed" list
- ⊘ Any tea not on the "allowed" list
- ⊘ Drink mixes and premixed drinks
- ⊘ Flavored coffee and coffee mixes
- ⊘ Fruit flavored powders, concentrates
- ⊘ Liqueurs, coolers
- ⊘ Meal replacement drinks
- ⊘ Moderate quantities of fruit juices only: fruit juices contain higher levels of salicylate than the fruit
- ⊘ Peppermint tea

Other

Foods with Low Levels of Salicylates (Allowed)

- ✓ Baking powder
- ✓ Baking soda
- ✓ Cream of tartar
- ✓ Distilled white vinegar
- ✓ Malt vinegar
- ✓ Marmite
- ✓ Plain gelatin
- ✓ Pure soy sauce
- ✓ Pure vanilla extract
- ✓ Relishes without fruits and vegetables on any of the "restricted" lists
- ✓ Vegemite

Foods with High Levels of Salicylates (Restricted)

- ⊘ All vinegars not on the "allowed" list and with "flavorings"
- ⊘ Flavored gelatin
- ⊘ Mustard
- ⊘ Pickles
- ⊘ Relish with ingredients on any of the "restricted" lists
- ⊘ Worcestershire sauce