

FDA cautions against 'undeclared' food allergens

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(HealthDay)—Some food labels may not reliably list all possible food allergens, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The agency added that these "undeclared allergens" are the leading cause of FDA-requested food recalls.

To prevent these recalls, the FDA said it is investigating why some possible [allergens](#) are omitted from [food labels](#). The FDA is also working with the food industry to improve testing for the presence of possible allergens.

In sorting through recall data, the FDA said it has already identified noticeable trends. One trend is that between September 2009 and September 2012, roughly one-third of all foods reported as serious health risks involved allergens that were not included on food labels. Most often, the foods involved were bakery products, snack foods, candy, dairy products, and dressings or sauces. Another trend is that the

allergens involved most frequently in recalls were milk, wheat, and soy. Also, labeling errors most often occur due to the use of the wrong label, the FDA found. This can happen when similar products are sold in similar packages, but contain different ingredients, including allergens.

Based on these findings, the FDA said the number of food allergen recalls can be reduced by increasing awareness about food allergens and improving the way food packages, labels, and ingredients are handled. The FDA advised consumers to learn about recalled products on the agency's website, the Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) website, and from food manufacturers.

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