

Safe & Healthy: Allergies to Gluten-Free Ingredient

Lupin, a legume belonging to the same plant family as peanuts, is showing up as a wheat replacement in an increasing number of gluten-free products that could be allergenic. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is now issuing an alert, urging consumers with peanut and soybean allergies to read labels before buying these products.

“Lupin is a yellow-colored bean that’s very popular in Europe, Mediterranean countries, Australia and New Zealand,” said Karen Blakeslee, Kansas State University extension specialist in food science and coordinator of the Rapid Response Center. “However, it is new to the United States and because of that, many consumers have never heard of it and may not realize that lupin has the same protein that causes allergic reactions to peanuts and soybeans.”

Allergic reactions can have various symptoms, including hives, swelling of the lips, vomiting, breathing difficulties and anaphylactic shock. Even those without allergies to legume products need to be aware of the ingredient.

“You can become allergic to something at any point in your life,” Blakeslee said. “If you do start seeing any symptoms of an allergic reaction, stop eating the food immediately and contact your doctor.”

The FDA expects lupin to become a popular product in the gluten-free arena because of its many health qualities. It is high in protein and in dietary fiber — which helps lower cholesterol — and is low in fat.

Manufacturers are required to list lupin on the food label. The FDA is actively monitoring complaints of lupin allergies by U.S. consumers.

There are a number of excellent resources on food allergies:

- Food Allergies: Reducing the Risks (video; FDA)
<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm182842.htm>
- Food Allergies: What You Need to Know (English, Spanish)
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm079311.htm>
- Food Allergies: Understanding Food Labels (Mayo Clinic) <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/food-allergy/in-depth/food-allergies/art-20045949>
- Gluten-Free Labeling of Foods (FDA)
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/Allergens/ucm362510.htm>

Stay food safe.