

Important Notice to Retail Businesses Regarding **Sesame as a Major Food Allergen** and **Required Allergen Consumer Advisories**

July 2026

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

KEY MESSAGES

The passage of California Senate Bill 68 (**SB 68**) on October 13, 2025, updated the California Retail Food Code (Sections 113820.5 and 114093.5 to add “**Sesame**” to the list of major food allergens and specifies how certain food facilities must inform customers about allergens in food products.

The list of major food allergens now includes:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Crustacean shellfish
- Tree nuts
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Soybeans
- **Sesame**

Effective July 1, 2026, written notification must be provided to the consumer about major food allergens in menu items by food facilities that meet the following criteria:

- Chain restaurants and similar food facilities with **20 or more locations**
 - Including locations outside of California
- A chain restaurant is defined as a food business operating under the same name and offering the same menu items

Beginning January 1, 2027, food facilities that are required to comply but fail to provide allergen information will receive a **1-point deduction** during routine inspections and may be subject to further enforcement action.

What is Sesame?

Sesame is an edible seed that comes from the *Sesamum indicum* plant. It is commonly used in breads, baked goods, sauces, dressings, oils, and candies. Sesame is found in many foods from different cultures and cuisines.

- Sesame may also be known as *benne/benniseed, gingelly, hu ma, til/teel, goma, or sim sim*.
- Common menu items that normally contain sesame include tahini, halva, sesamol, sesamolina, and ajonjoli.
- Highly refined sesame oil is not considered a major food allergen source under this law.

Allergic Reactions

Sesame naturally contains several different kinds of proteins that can cause allergic reactions in some people after they eat it. When people with a sesame allergy eat foods containing sesame, symptoms can occur very quickly and may be life-threatening. Symptoms may include skin irritation, coughing, hives, trouble breathing, dizziness, vomiting, and severe swelling.

Consumer Advisories

Chain restaurants must clearly notify customers when menu items contain major food allergens.

Food facilities must notify consumers using **one** of the following methods:

- **Written Notice:** Facilities may include a written statement on a menu or menu board identifying the major food allergen(s) in any specific menu item. The statement must appear below or immediately next to the item.
- **Digital Notice:** Facilities may use a digital method, such as a QR code, that links to the facility's digital menu. If a digital notice is used, **facilities must also provide an alternative method** to inform customers who are unable to access digital formats about specific menu items containing major food allergens. Alternative methods may include any of the following:
 - A separate allergen-specific menu
 - An allergen chart
 - An allergen grid
 - An allergen booklet
 - Other written materials

When providing information to customers, food facilities must use common names for major food allergens or simple pictures or images to communicate allergen information.

If someone is experiencing a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Exemptions

The requirements under SB 68 **DO NOT** apply to:

- Food facilities that are **not part of a chain** with 20 or more locations (including locations outside of California) operating under the same name and offering mostly the same menu items.
- Compact Mobile Food Operations or nonpermanent food facilities, such as temporary food facilities or mobile food facilities.
- The sale of prepackaged foods that are subject to federal labeling requirements for major food allergens.

Additional Resources

Regulatory Guidance for Major Food Allergens

- California Legislative Information — Senate Bill 68: Major Food Allergens
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB68
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH) — Major Food Allergens
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/Pages/FDBPrograms/FoodSafetyProgram/SB68MajorFoodAllergens.aspx>

Resources for Managing Food Allergies

- U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) — Consumer Advisory for Food Allergies
<https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/food-allergies-what-you-need-know>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — Resources for Managing Food Allergies
<https://www.cdc.gov/restaurant-food-safety/php/practices/food-allergy-reactions.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/school-health-conditions/food-allergies/publications.html>

For questions regarding the requirements of SB 68, please contact the Environmental Health Customer Support Center at **(888) 700-9995, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.**