

Enjoy Life® Offers Tips and a New Label for Selecting Food Allergy-Friendly Products

SCHILLER PARK, IL - A single, innocent parent oversight resulting in a child's anaphylactic reaction to one of its allergy-friendly foods recently prompted one company to voluntarily strengthen the food allergy labeling on all of its products. "As the U.S. leader in allergy-friendly AND gluten-free foods, we take very seriously our responsibility to our customers," says Scott Mandell, President, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Enjoy Life Foods. "So we want to do everything in our power to ensure that what happened with that child doesn't happen again," he adds ...

Although Enjoy Life Foods' labels and ingredient statements are fully compliant with FDA allergy labeling regulations (The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA)), the parent apparently misinterpreted the "allergy-free" symbol on the front of its package and failed to read carefully the ingredient statement and package information to determine whether or not his child could eat the product safely.

So, the company redesigned the proprietary symbol on the front of its packages to be even more explicit and to minimize the risk of any potential confusion on the part of its consumers. The old symbol said "allergy-free" and "free of all common allergens." The new, strengthened symbol says "allergy-friendly" and "free of the eight common allergens." In both cases, the packaging directs consumers to read the side or back panel where it is clearly indicated what the product does and does not contain and that it is made in a dedicated nut- and gluten-free facility.

Enjoy Life Foods has partnered with AllergyMoms.com and the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) — as part of Food Allergy Awareness Week (May 11-17) -- to urge people with food allergies and other special dietary needs to use extra caution when making food purchases. Food Allergy Awareness Week was created in 1997 by FAAN to raise awareness of food allergies and their consequences.

"Reading ingredient labels and avoiding certain foods is the cornerstone of managing food allergies," says Anne Muñoz-Furlong, Founder and CEO of FAAN. "We applaud companies like Enjoy Life Foods who take a proactive approach in making ingredients easy to read for the 12 million Americans who have food allergies."

"Most experienced parents of kids with food allergies know the importance of reading ingredient statements carefully," says Gina Clowes, founder of the popular AllergyMoms.com blog. "But as more and more kids are diagnosed with food allergies, less experienced parents may think a term like "allergy-free" is enough," she adds.

So Clowes suggests the following tips for consumers buying allergy-friendly products:

- Have an unbreakable rule: no label = no thank you. Never eat a food that does not have a label.
- Always carefully read ingredient statements. Different versions of the same food can have different ingredients (for example, chewy Spree candy contains egg white while original Spree does not).
- Know that different sizes of the same foods can contain different ingredients. (For example, some "mini" versions of Laffy Taffy do not contain egg, but the large size does contain egg.)
- Don't rely on common sense to determine if foods are safe. Tuna and flavored water can contain dairy, egg rolls and chili can contain peanut butter, licorice and soy sauce can contain wheat, and the list goes on.
- Take all precautionary warnings seriously. Manufacturers use different statements to warn consumers like "may contain" or "processed in a facility with." However, the language used does not indicate the level of risk.
- Know that precautionary warnings are voluntary. If a product does not have a warning, it does not mean that the product is free of cross contamination. When in doubt, call the company to find out where and how the product was processed.
- Don't play ingredient roulette. Even if you or your child once ate a product with a warning, that does not mean the next batch will be safe.
- Beware of hidden allergens. Potent allergens like sesame and mustard can hide behind the words "natural flavors" or "spices."
- Know where the food is made. Seek out products that say they are made in a "dedicated peanut-free, nut-free, soy-free or allergy-free facility," depending on your diet restriction. This provides even further assurance of the food's safety.

Enjoy Life Foods currently has 21 delicious products including allergy-friendly AND gluten-free soft-baked cookies, snack bars, granola, trail mixes, bagels and semi-sweet chocolate chips. All Enjoy Life products are free of the eight most common allergens^{[1][1]} and made in a dedicated nut- and gluten-free bakery. They are also certified gluten-free (by the Gluten-Free Certification Organization), and are all-natural, trans fat-free and Kosher. More than 80 percent of Enjoy Life's products are vegan with the exception of three products^{[2][2]} that are vegetarian because they contain honey.

About Enjoy Life Foods

Enjoy Life Natural Brands, LLC (d/b/a Enjoy Life Foods, LLC (ELF)) was founded in 2001 with the mission of making great-tasting allergy-friendly foods that most everyone can eat freely. The company launched the Enjoy Life brand in 2002 with a broad product line that is free of the eight most common allergens and gluten-free. To meet the needs of a rapidly growing consumer base, in 2004 the company acquired Perky's, a line of gluten- and nut-free cereals. Today, ELF offers 26 different Enjoy Life and Perky's products that are sold in natural food and select grocery stores throughout the United States and Canada. Visit www.enjoylifefoods.com and www.perkysnaturalfoods.com for store locations and more. In September 2007, Enjoy Life Foods was named to Inc. 500 list of the fastest growing privately held businesses in the U.S. For more information, visit www.enjoylifefoods.com.