



Traveling to Japan With Food Allergies

Food allergies don't have to stop you from traveling. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, careful preparation and communication will help make your trip safe and enjoyable. This guide provides some helpful tips while traveling to Japan as well as more information on understanding food labels and dining out at restaurants.

Medication

Bring a kit with all your medications, including extra epinephrine auto-injectors. Food Allergy Forum (FAF) also recommends carrying a bilingual list of symptoms and instructions, "When to Inject Epinephrine," created by the Japanese Society of Pediatric Allergy and Clinical Immunology. In an emergency situation, it is especially difficult to communicate the specific symptoms of anaphylaxis. By carrying this bilingual list, you will be able to point at the exact symptom you are experiencing, resulting in timely and appropriate medical care. A copy of the bilingual list is included in this document. Be sure to bring extra copies with you and keep your list in a place where others can find it. It is important that you and your travel companions understand what to do in case of an emergency.

Ask your doctor to write prescriptions that you can carry with you. **EpiPen® is the only epinephrine auto-injector available in Japan**, so be sure to consult your doctor if you are using a different kind.

Understand policies for carrying medication on board the aircraft. According to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, which handles airport security in Japan, you are allowed to carry your epinephrine in the aircraft cabin. However, you may need to show the printed label that identifies the medication. It is recommended that you also show the prescription label from the pharmacy. You should also have your doctor complete a Travel Plan that confirms your food allergy and travel requirements. A Japanese/English version of the Travel Plan of the International Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Alliance is included in this document.

Emergencies

ADMINISTER EPINEPHRINE AND DIAL 1-1-9

Always keep your epinephrine with you and easily accessible. Let your travel companions know about your allergies so they know what to do in case of an emergency and where your auto-injectors are located.

In the event of an emergency, administer epinephrine immediately. It is critical not to delay epinephrine. After administering epinephrine, contact emergency services by calling 1-1-9 to request ambulance transport to a hospital emergency department. Not all ambulances are equipped with epinephrine, so be sure to inform the dispatcher that epinephrine may be needed. It is important to remain at the hospital for several hours for observation because symptoms may return. Please follow the hospital's instructions.

Familiarize yourself with the local emergency services phone number and dialing procedures. For example, some hotels may have specific procedures for dialing 1-1-9 from your room. Be aware of your location so that you can give the dispatcher specific information. Also, familiarize yourself with where the nearest emergency department is located. To find an emergency department near where you will be traveling, please visit the Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Medical Information Center website at: himawari.metro.tokyo.jp/gg/gg13enmnlit.asp. Emergency translation services are available. Another medical care resource for visitors is the AMDA International Medical Information Center at eng.amda-imic.com.

Keep in mind that you may want to purchase travel insurance prior to coming to Japan. Emergency care can be costly, and you should be able to access funds while abroad.

Understanding Japanese Food Labels

Reading food labels on packaged food is an important part of managing food allergies and avoiding your allergen. In Japan, the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) has designated 7 food allergens that manufacturers are legally obligated to indicate on the labels when they are included as ingredients. These are egg, milk, wheat, peanut, buckwheat, shrimp and crab. Although they must be indicated on the label when they are included in a product, it should be noted that they can be displayed in a number of different ways. In addition, the CAA has recommended to manufacturers that 20 additional foods be displayed on labels: abalone, squid, salmon roe, salmon, mackerel, beef, pork, chicken, sesame, walnut, cashew nut, apple, banana, orange, kiwi fruit, peach, soybean, matsutake mushroom, yam and gelatin.

Please be aware the above mentioned allergens are the most common in Japan, and that they differ from other countries. Since labelling regulations may be entirely different, if in doubt, we advise you to ask around. Following is a bilingual list of the 7 food allergens that require

labeling. Because labeling obligations apply only to packaged food, it may be helpful to carry this list with you when shopping or dining out.

Snacks and Meals

It is recommended that you travel with non-perishable food that is safe for you to eat in case you are unable to find allergen-free food while traveling. Snack bars that are free of your allergen are a good option. If you plan on staying in a hotel, most rooms have a refrigerator. Rest houses (for backpackers) are often equipped with a kitchen and microwave. You may be able to purchase some of the same products in Japan as you can back home, but remember that the same product manufactured in different countries can contain different ingredients.

Dining Out at Restaurants



When you are dining out with food allergies, planning ahead is important. Consider choosing chain restaurants. Each restaurant is likely to use the same ingredients and prepare foods the same way, and a growing number are allergy-aware. Before you go to the restaurant, there are some steps you can take to see if a particular restaurant is a good choice for you. Many restaurants have websites and post their menus online for you to review ahead of time. You can also call the restaurant and ask to speak to the chef or manager about your food allergies, menu items and meal preparation. We recommend calling during off-peak hours.

Communication between restaurants and customers with food allergies is essential to a safe dining experience. The restaurant manager and wait staff should know about your food allergy. Remind a manager or the head waiter about your allergies before you are seated. In addition to asking questions about the ingredients and preparation methods, carry a “chef card” that outlines the foods you must avoid. Present the card to the chef or manager for review.

Chef cards can be downloaded in English and nine other languages (including Japanese) at foodallergy.org/diningout.

When selecting your meal, keep it simple. If you have to ask complicated questions about the items on a menu, ordering simple fare may be the safest. Be sure to ask what is in your dish and how it is prepared. It is important that the restaurant understands what you are allergic to and takes steps to avoid cross-contact. You may want to speak to the manager and the chef, just to be sure.

Remember, never be embarrassed if you feel you are not communicating effectively. If a member of the wait staff doesn't seem to understand your situation, always trust your instincts and seek out another staff member or manager. Sometimes, the safest choice is to avoid eating, and find a safe meal somewhere else.

Allergen		Japanese	
Egg		卵	Tamago
Milk		乳・乳製品	Nyu Nyu-seihin
Wheat		小麦	Komugi
Peanut		落花生	Rakkasei
Buckwheat		そば・蕎麦	Soba
Shrimp		えび	Ebi
Crab		かに	Kani

Top 7 Allergens Labeled in Japan

Resources

Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan: see Japanese/English version attached below

Tokyo Metropolitan Health and Medical Information Center: himawari.metro.tokyo.jp/qq/qq13enmnlit.asp

AMDA International Medical Information Center: eng.amda-imic.com

Reading Food Labels: foodallergy.org/foodlabels

International Travel Plan: see Japanese/English version attached below