

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

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Newsletter

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Dairy-Free Dark Chocolate, is it really dairy-free?

With Halloween and Thanksgiving right around the corner, food allergies come to mind at The Allergy & Asthma Clinic. We would like to share an announcement made today by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regarding the results of a sampling of domestically manufactured dark chocolate bars and dark chocolate chips labeled as “dairy free” or with similar claims. The FDA conducted the sampling to better understand the extent to which these products contain potentially hazardous levels of milk for consumers with an allergy to milk.



The agency collected 119 samples, representing 52 products, at retail, with some purchased on-line. The 15-month survey began in July 2018 and ended in October 2019. The FDA found that four of the 52 products sampled (12 of 119 samples), all dark chocolate bars, had potentially hazardous levels of milk allergen. The levels, ranging from 600 to 3,100 parts per million (ppm), had the potential to cause severe reactions in consumers with milk allergy. In response to these findings, the manufacturers recalled all four products.

Based on these findings we encourage you or your loved ones with milk allergy, who choose to eat dairy-free chocolate, to contact the manufacturers and inquire about how the product is made, including whether the product is made on equipment dedicated to making dairy-free chocolate, whether the ingredients used are free of milk, and whether the manufacturer tests its products with dairy-free claims for the presence of milk.

Protecting Yourself from Wildfire Smoke

As we continue to deal with poor air quality due to the wild fires in Northern California, we would like to offer some tips on the best ways to prevent breathing in the harmful particles in wildfire smoke.

- When air quality reaches dangerous levels due to wildfire smoke, the most effective way to reduce exposure and avoid the ill effects of smoke is to stay indoors with windows and doors closed.
- If you have a central ducted air conditioning and heating system, be sure to set the system to “on” to ensure air is being filtered constantly, rather than “auto,” which runs the system intermittently.
 - If your system brings fresh air into the home, close the fresh-air intake so that it operates in “recirculation” mode to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside.
 - Install a high-efficiency filter (MERV 13 rating or higher) with a MERV rating as high as your system can handle, based on the manufacturer’s recommendation.
- Consider using a California Air Resources Board CARB certified air cleaner which can greatly reduce indoor particle levels to further reduce impacts from smoke.
- Do not run swamp coolers or whole house fans.
- Avoid activities that increase indoor pollution, such as burning candles, using gas stoves and burning wood in the fire place.
- If you must go outside wear an N95 mask. Your Covid-19 face covering will not protect you from breathing in smoke particles.

If you or your loved is experiencing a flare in allergy or asthma symptoms due to the wildfire smoke, call our office and make an in person or telehealth appointment with one of our allergy and asthma specialists.