

Low Sulphite Diet

What are sulphites?

Sulphites are some of the oldest and most commonly used preservatives in our food supply. Sulphites act to prolong the shelf life of foods by slowing browning reactions. They may also be used as bleaching agents or preservatives in some foods, drinks and medicines.

Are sulphites safe?

For most people sulphites in foods are safe and do not cause a problem, however a small number of people react to sulphites.

In sensitive people sulphites can cause exacerbation of asthma, skin rashes or gastric irritation. Tolerance levels will vary greatly between people.

How to avoid sulphites

The presence of sulphite preservatives should be declared on the ingredients label of a packaged food. Always check the ingredient list on the food product label carefully.

The following preservative numbers should be avoided:

220	Sulphur dioxide
221	Sodium Sulphite
222	Sodium bisulphite
223	Sodium metabisulphite
224	Potassium metabisulphite
225	Potassium Sulphite
228	Potassium bisulphite

To make shopping easier – **aim to avoid all preservative numbers 220- 228.**

If you are not sure, check with the manufacturer or avoid the food.

Ask your pharmacist about your medicines, liquids or syrups as they may contain sulphite preservatives.

If I can't tolerate sulphites should I avoid other food preservatives?

No. Many people who do not tolerate sulphites tolerate other food preservatives. If you are unsure, talk to your doctor or dietitian.



Eating away from home

Always ask the food outlet (e.g. restaurant or take-away shop) if any of their foods or drinks contain any sulphite preservatives. If you are not sure about a food, then do not eat it.

Common foods that may contain sulphites

Drinks	
> fruit juice > cordial > soft drink > tomato juice	> wine > cider > beer
Fruit and vegetables	
> dried vegetables (e.g. deb potato) > commercial hot potato chips > frozen home oven potato chips > pickled foods > maraschino cherries > commercial prepared salads	> grapes > dried fruit > foods containing dried fruit > crystallised pineapple
Meats	
> mince > meat pies / sausage rolls / pasties > frankfurters > meat and fish pastes > preserved or canned seafood > sausages	> shrimp > lobster > crayfish > prawns > delicatessen meats (e.g. salami, fritz)
Other	
> low-joule jam > lemon butter > vinegar > flour (may be used as bleaching agent) > commercial soups and sauces > commercial salad dressings	> gelatine > glucose syrup > flavouring essences and syrups > desiccated coconut > chocolates with soft centres or dried fruit > commercial cream filled biscuits

More information

The original and educational content of this booklet has been reviewed by specialist Dietitians at the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN), SA Health. For any matters relating to this resource, please contact the WCHN Nutrition Department on (08) 8161 7233.

Food product and vitamin supplementation information contained in this booklet was up to date at the time of revision. If you are not sure about food, check with the manufacturer.

Produced by

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Revised and printed March 2017