

# The Label-Reading Checklist

## *for Sensory-Sensitive Diets*

This started with my nephew. My sister spent months figuring out why certain foods triggered meltdowns — turns out preservatives, dyes, gluten, egg, dairy, shellfish, and even heavily spiced foods were setting off reactions she couldn't predict until she learned to read labels differently. This is what she wishes she'd had on day one.

☐ **Dyes**

Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1 — check by name or under “artificial color”

☐ **Gluten**

Wheat, barley, rye, malt, “modified food starch” (verify the source grain)

☐ **Dairy / Casein**

Milk, whey, casein, lactose — watch for “natural flavors,” which can hide dairy derivatives

☐ **Egg**

Albumin, lysozyme, globulin

☐ **Shellfish**

Shrimp, crab, lobster, and “natural flavoring” derived from shellfish stock — common in seasoning blends

☐ **Preservatives**

BHA, BHT, TBHQ, sodium benzoate

☐ **Heavily spiced / seasoned foods**

Strong spice blends, hot sauces, heavily seasoned coatings — can overwhelm sensory processing

☐ **Black pepper**

Often overlooked, but a common sensory trigger in seasoning mixes and flavor packets

### READING ORDER

Ingredients list first (not front-of-box claims) → allergen statement → “may contain” warnings.

*A note on trial and error: every child responds differently — this is a starting map, not a diagnosis.*