



Food Allergies

Food allergies are estimated to affect approximately 15 million Americans. Twenty percent (20%) of the population has altered its diet due to adverse reactions to perceived allergenic ingredients in foods (Murray & Pizzorno, 2012). A reaction can be due to an aggravating body response to a food component (protein, food additive, preservative, colorant, or pesticide).

TRUE FOOD ALLERGY

Food allergies occur when an ingested food component is recognized as a foreign substance and the immune system overreacts and attacks it. The 8 most common food allergens (90% of all food allergies) are:

- Eggs
- Milk
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Wheat
- Crustacean shellfish
- Fish
- Soy

THE REMAINING 10% OF FOOD ALLERGIES INCLUDE

- Corn
- Gelatin
- Meat
- Seeds
- Spices

An allergic reaction can cause swelling, inflammation, redness, itching, pain, impaired breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, and dizziness. Symptoms can be severe and life threatening and appear within a few minutes to several hours after ingestion. One example of an allergic reaction is anaphylactic shock.

FOOD SENSITIVITY OR INTOLERANCE

A food sensitivity is a non-immune metabolic reaction to food components. Inflammatory mediators create mild or moderate symptoms (no anaphylaxis).

THE POSSIBLE CULPRITS ARE

- Chemicals and toxins
- Food additives
- Pesticides
- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)
- Artificial sweeteners
- Naturally occurring food components: proteins, carbohydrates, tyramines

EXAMPLES

- Lactose intolerance (due to lack of lactase enzyme)
- Non-celiac gluten sensitivity
- Food poisoning
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Migraine headaches due to ingestion of caffeine, aged cheese, or wine

RISK FACTORS

Eighty to ninety percent (80–90%) of food reactions develop slowly due to repeated eating of allergenic food. Ten percent (10%) of the time people remain allergic to the food throughout their lifetimes. Contributors include:

- Impaired digestion
 - ▶ Inadequate hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes, and chewing
 - ▶ Eating when stressed
 - ▶ Impaired gut flora
 - ▶ Eating too much or too often
 - ▶ Early weaning from breastfeeding and prematurely introducing solid foods
- Malnutrition
 - ▶ Excessive and frequent consumption of a limited number of commercial foods

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- ▶ The average American gets about 75% of the calories from as few as 10 different foods: sugar, wheat, dairy, corn, soy, eggs, and peanuts
- Toxins
 - ▶ Food additives: preservatives, stabilizers, natural and artificial colors and flavors, artificial sweeteners, trans fats, hydrogenated vegetable oils, MSG
 - ▶ Commercial foods: herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, GMOs, hormones
 - ▶ Environmental pollution of food, air, and water: chemicals, heavy metals, plastics, bisphenols
- Genetics
 - ▶ Food allergy and a low allergic set point are often inherited (Murray & Pizzorno, 2012)
- Stress
 - ▶ Inhibits the digestion of food and absorption of nutrients
 - ▶ Diverts blood away from the digestive organs
- ▶ Record all symptoms for the next 72 hours after eating
- ▶ Symptoms may be tied to the ingestion of specific food (cheese) or combination of foods (pizza)
- ▶ Foods causing a mild reaction can be added back into the diet on a rotational basis
- ▶ Foods to which a person reacts strongly are best eliminated for four months and then reintroduced
- Pulse test
 - ▶ Pulse taken before and after eating potentially reactive foods
 - ▶ Pulse change of more than 10 beats per minute can indicate a food sensitivity
- Laboratory tests ordered by medical providers
 - ▶ Skin prick (skin scratch) test
 - ▶ ELISA blood tests
- Trained practitioners can use additional tests to detect and manage food sensitivity
 - ▶ Applied kinesiology, electro-acupuncture, NAET (allergy elimination techniques), and electro dermal screening (Murray & Pizzorno, 2012)

ASSESSMENT

A healthy response is to feel satiated, energized, and clear after ingesting a meal, snack, or beverage. How does the body respond to certain foods, food products, and food components?

If it feels poorly immediately or several hours after eating:

- Elimination diet
 - ▶ Elimination of one or more of the common food allergens and, for 1-16 weeks, eating simple and easy to digest hypoallergenic foods—vegetables, rice, lamb, chicken, apples, etc.
- Food reintroduction
 - ▶ One type of triggering food is reintroduced every 4 days

PREVENTION

- Read food labels carefully.
- Examine ingredients when eating prepared foods.
- Notice reactions to single foods and combinations of foods.
- Examine the connection between reactions to food and certain behaviors or situations (eating in a rush or overeating at parties).
- Eat a variety of whole, fresh, S.O.U.L foods (seasonal, organic, unprocessed, and local) to ensure freshness and high-nutrient concentrations.
- Avoid Nutrition Bandits and processed foods.

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- If prone to sensitivities, rotate food groups every four days.
- Chew food well.
- Learn to manage daily stress.
- Eat meals and snacks in a calm and peaceful atmosphere.
- Wear an allergy bracelet at all times (FARE, 2015).

THE HEALING PROCESS

If the triggering food is avoided for a period of time and effective healing strategies are implemented, food may be reintroduced and tolerated:

- Elimination diet: 1-16 weeks
- Food reintroduction
- Food rotation
- Cleansing/detoxification:
 - ▶ Supports digestion and rests the digestive tract
 - ▶ Balances body pH—acidity and alkalinity
 - ▶ Allows for improved nutrient absorption
 - ▶ Enhances immune system and detoxification capabilities
- Healing the intestinal tract with the 4Rs (under professional supervision)

- Remove offending substances
 - ▶ Food components, chemicals, toxins, microbes, yeast
- Replace what is missing
 - ▶ Hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes, specific nutrients
- Reinoculate the gut
 - ▶ Beneficial bacteria
- Repair any damage to the intestinal tract

All of us are unique with individual vulnerabilities, and the “healthiest” food in the world can cause harm in someone who is sensitive to it. The onset of food allergies, sensitivities, and intolerances can occur at any time in our lives. Food reactions appear to be influenced by dose, duration, and frequency of ingestion of the reactive foods. Genetic predisposition and biochemical individuality play a role in determining what organ or tissue will become inflamed after the ingestion of a reactive food.

The Eating for Health® approach encourages individuals to pay attention and notice if a food or combination of foods are healing or distressing to the body. Each person is advised to build a food plan that is grounded on staple foods that work well for his/her body and notice which foods are best eaten often, occasionally, or not at all.

REFERENCES

Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE). (2015). Allergens. Food Allergy. Retrieved in 2015 from <http://www.foodallergy.org/allergens>

Murray, M. & Pizzorno, J. (2012). *The encyclopedia of natural medicine*. New York, NY: Atria