

Simple Elimination Diet

The purpose of an elimination diet is to discover symptom-triggering foods. Everyone's body responds to foods differently. If we are sensitive to a food, there are a host of symptoms our body can respond with, such as headaches, skin rashes, joint pains, and digestive problems, just to name a few.

Begin by eliminating foods you think may be the source of your symptoms. If you are unsure, start with the foods that most commonly cause a reaction, these include:

<i>*Dairy products (lactose and casein)</i>	<i>Peanuts</i>	<i>Coffee</i>
<i>*Wheat (and other gluten-containing foods)</i>	<i>Tomatoes</i>	<i>Black tea</i>
<i>Eggs (whites particularly)</i>	<i>Shellfish</i>	<i>Alcohol</i>
<i>Corn</i>	<i>All citrus fruits and juices</i>	<i>Soy</i>
	<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Artificial sweeteners</i>
	<i>Chocolate</i>	<i>Yeast</i>

* Dairy and gluten are two of the biggest culprits.

Remove the suspected foods for a two-week period. Be aware of hidden ingredients in manufactured products. In addition to the suspected foods, be sure to avoid alcoholic beverages, caffeinated drinks (coffee, teas and colas), MSG, aspartame (NutraSweet®), nitrates (chemical stabilizers found in meats to preserve the color) and sulfites (preservatives used in many foods, particularly dried fruits.)

Questions to Ask: How do you feel? Do you have more energy? Are your symptoms less severe?

Symptom-safe list: These foods generally work well with people and do not contribute to symptoms or conditions.

- Brown rice.
- Cooked or dried fruits free of sulfites (cherries, cranberries, pears, prunes) but not citrus fruits, apples, bananas, peaches, or tomatoes.
- Cooked green, yellow, and orange vegetables (artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, chard, collards, lettuce, spinach, string beans, summer or winter squash, sweet potatoes, tapioca, and taro).
- Water (filtered is best). Avoid teas, they can be triggers.
- Condiments, such as sea salt, maple syrup, honey, molasses, and vanilla extract.
- Chicken, turkey, lamb, and cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel and halibut. Select from free-range and hormone-free animal products.
- It is best to use cold-pressed, organic oils, such as extra virgin olive and coconut.
- The more whole, unprocessed foods you eat the better it is for you, your sensitivities, and your immune system!

What Foods are Triggering Your Symptoms? It is time to track down your personal food triggers. After two weeks (or more if your symptoms have not diminished) on the elimination diet, it is time to start testing foods. Add foods one at a time, every three days, to assess which ones worsen symptoms. Have a generous amount of each new food so you can see whether it causes symptoms. For three days, observe your reactions to a certain food after it has been added back in. Reactions can take as long as 72 hours to manifest. If symptoms do not flare up, keep the food in your diet. Anything that causes symptoms should be eliminated. Then, after a week or two, try the suspect food once again for confirmation.

Some Tips to Help Identify Triggers:

- The offending foods can be ones you are fond of, perhaps even foods you crave.
- If you are affected by several foods, eliminating only one may make little difference with your symptoms. This sometimes leads people to believe that foods are not the problem.
- You may find that you can have a small amount of a trigger food without observing symptoms, while a larger amount causes a reaction.
- Your tolerance may be impacted by different factors. For example, natural hormonal fluctuations may make one more sensitive.
- Your triggers can change over time.

Modified Elimination Diet: If eliminating all suspect food from your diet at one time is too drastic, try eliminating particular classes of foods one at a time. For example, eliminate all gluten containing foods for a two-week period and see your reaction. If symptoms are not relieved, then eliminate all dairy products as well (and continue to keep wheat off the menu) for the next two-week period, and so on. Continue deleting a food or class of foods until your symptoms improve. Once symptoms have improved, it can be assumed that you are sensitive to the most recently deleted foods. You can then add the other foods back into your diet, one at a time, but stay alert for any reactions.

Diet Diary: You can also try tracking down food sensitivities by using a diet diary. For three to four weeks, write down everything you eat and when you eat it, along with how you feel, and any reactions you have. After the four-week period, you should be able to detect patterns in your responses to different foods.

Recipes Resources

Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon, 2001

Special Diet Solutions by Carol Fenster, Ph.D. 1998

The Gluten-Free Kitchen by Roben Ryberg, 2000

Special Diet Celebrations by Carol Fenster, Ph.D. 1999

Going Against the Grain by Melissa Diane Smith 2002

Information gathered from Zand, Janet, L.A.c. OMD. *Smart Medicine for Healthier Living*. Avery. 1999.