

### FOOD ALLERGY, INTOLERANCE AND HIDDEN ILLNESS

#### WHAT ARE FOOD ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCES?

Millions of Americans suffer from the symptoms of food allergy or intolerance and don't know it. Common foods eaten by most people can produce a variety of physical and mental disorders. Much has been learned about treating food allergies/intolerances, once they've been discovered. With great patience and good detective work, many people are able to discover the offending food items. In other cases, you may want to confer with a physician regarding this problem.

A wide range of symptoms from headache to heartburn, arthritis to anxiety, rashes to restlessness, stuffed nose to suicidal feelings, and constipation to colitis, can result from the foods and drinks we like best or eat most often. These symptoms most likely indicate *food intolerance*. Other reactions can occur suddenly and are more serious, producing symptoms as severe as breathing impairment, skin rashes or urticaria (hives), or even shock. People who react in this way to certain foods usually know from experience that they have a problem with true and severe *food allergies*.

More often, however, unsuspected food intolerances produce a variety of milder, annoying symptoms, which linger and recur. Such symptoms as sinus congestion, headaches, chronic fatigue, skin rashes, asthma, and colitis are fairly common physical reactions. Mental and emotional problems are common as well because the brain and nervous system are part of the physical body, susceptible to physical as well as psychological influences. Depression, anxiety, irritability, and hyperactivity in adults or children are often caused by chronic food intolerance.

#### HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU HAVE A FOOD ALLERGY OR INTOLERANCE?

The most accurate (and probably the most difficult) method of detection involves removal of all foods that commonly create problems, and then slowly and individually, the individual foods are reintroduced every fourth or fifth day, watching for the return of symptoms. This method is referred to as the Allergy Elimination Diet and Challenge.

You can start by reading or talking to people who know more about the subject. *Dr. Mandell's Five-Day Allergy Relief System* by M. Mandell is one book that is practical, informative, and easy to read. Other books include *Food Allergies* by N. Orenstein and S. Bingham, *Food Intolerance* by R. Buist, *Traditional Foods are your Best Medicines* by R. Schmid, *The Allergy Self-Help Cookbook* by M. H. Jones, *Allergy Recipes* by S. Rockwell and *Surviving the Nineties: Coping with Food Intolerances* by D. Thom.

Some of these books describe ways you may be able to test yourself for food intolerance. In other cases, professional help will be required to accurately diagnose food allergies or intolerances using various laboratory and clinical diagnostic procedures. Some testing methodologies have advantages over traditional skin (dermal) testing, which is not very sensitive for detecting food intolerances. For example, EAV (Electro-Acupuncture According to Vol) and the VEGATEST-Method are non-invasive, investigative, energetic evaluation methodologies that utilize a galvanometer. Such methods can be useful for evaluating inhalant and food sensitivities, including food combinations, though they may not have actual clinical study data (only empirical or observational support) to demonstrate their efficacy in evaluating food intolerances.

If your food intolerance is limited to one or two types of foods, simply eliminating these foods from your diet will often relieve your symptoms. In no time you may be able to add these foods back into your diet on an occasional or rotational basis. It is beneficial to learn how to eat a wider variety of healthy foods, and systematically rotate food groups. This often decreases the likelihood of creating further food sensitivities. If you have any questions regarding food intolerance or food allergies, ask your physician.

### **Resources**

1. Thom, Dickson. *Surviving the Nineties: Coping with Food Intolerances*.
2. Buist, R. *Food Intolerance*.
3. Orenstein, N. and Bingham, S. *Food Allergies*.

Acknowledgement to Bastyr University Revised 9/9/02 - Food Allergy, Intolerance and Hidden Illness