

Elimination-Then-Challenge Diet

An alternative to being tested by a physician for food sensitivities is to use the elimination-then-challenge diet. Certain foods commonly cause the majority of symptoms. When you avoid the foods for a time that cause you to have the reaction, your symptoms will improve or disappear, but they will usually return when you eat the foods again.

Before starting, it is important to decide what symptoms you hope the diet will relieve. Otherwise, it will be difficult to decide whether the diet has been effective or not. Do not become discouraged if improvement does not occur immediately. The foods causing your symptoms can stay in the digestive tract for many days or even weeks.

Remove the following foods from your diet for at least 7 days; 14 days would be better. The primary food offenders are milk and other dairy products, wheat, eggs, corn, peanuts, bananas, beef, cheese, potatoes, orange juice and other citrus fruits, sugar, chocolate, coffee and black tea, alcohol, and soy. You should also avoid some or all of your favorite foods. Avoid packaged and processed foods whenever possible as well as canned foods. They line many cans with phenol resins that cause reactions in chemically sensitive people. You are not as likely to react to foods that are fresh, whole, organic, and without added preservatives and other chemicals.

Wheat and corn are likely causes of unrecognized food sensitivities. They are two of the most difficult foods to eliminate since it is hard to bake without wheat's gluten content and many products have corn hidden in them. Other likely allergens are food additives, especially yellow dye #5 (found in cheese, butter and ice cream), pollen, yeast, and spices. Asthmatics should remove avocado from the diet, and gallstone patients need to eliminate onions and eggs. Eating sugar makes a sensitivity to food additives even worse.

Foods to include in the diet during the elimination-then-challenge part of the diet unless you know that they make you ill are:

1. Any vegetable, but not corn: include beets, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, turnips, Brussels sprouts, squash, lettuce, carrots, celery, and sweet potatoes.
2. Any fruit, but not citrus: include cherry, cranberry (juice), blueberry, apple (juice), figs, etc.
3. Any meats, but not luncheon meats, sausage, bacon, hot dogs or ham: include chicken, turkey, lamb, fish, beef, pork, etc.
4. Any grains, but not wheat or corn: include buckwheat, spelt, millet, quinoa, white rice, oat, etc.
5. Beverages, but not milk, coffee, black tea, or soft drinks: include herb teas, mineral water, unsweetened fruit juice (not citrus), water, etc.

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6. Miscellaneous: include nuts (not peanuts), honey or pure maple syrup if not hyperactive, and oils such as safflower, sunflower, or canola oil. It is best if oils are cold-pressed and organic.
7. Add an intestinal cleanser the first seven days if you have constipation or the feeling of toxicity.

On day eight, or when you decide to begin the challenge part of the diet, select one food that you eliminated and re-introduce that food into each meal that day. If there is no reaction to that food throughout the day then you may assume that there is no sensitivity to it. On day nine remove the food you tested on day eight from the diet, again. Select a new food to test in the same manner as before. Follow this procedure for each food. A special point should be made here. Sometimes with delayed-onset food symptoms, it can take up to a week to trigger a reaction. If the procedure of introducing a new food back into the diet each day does not work because you cannot identify which food is causing your symptoms, then you may have to introduce a new food only once each week.

Keep a diet diary of the foods introduced and the symptoms (see the Diet Diary form). Start the diet diary 3 days before beginning the elimination diet. Continue recording the diet and symptoms during the elimination diet. Still continue to record the diet and symptoms while adding back the suspected foods.

It usually takes about 7 days to see improvement on the elimination-then-challenge diet. Some children with chronic food sensitivities won't improve for at least 10-14 days. When this improvement lasts for at least one week, you may begin adding back in foods that you did not think caused any reaction, but only one food at a time. First, add back the food you think is the least likely to be causing any problems. Save any suspected foods until last. If the person being tested is sensitive to any of the eliminated foods then symptoms should develop when the food is eaten again. If you can't tell which food is causing the sensitivity then a suggested way of returning foods to the diet is:

Day 1 add oranges	Day 5 add food coloring
Day 2 add egg	Day 6 add chocolate
Day 3 add wheat	Day 7 add sugar
Day 4 add corn	Day 8 add milk

The following suggestions help make this type of testing more accurate:

- Eat as much of the re-introduced food as you want for breakfast. If there are no symptoms, then you need to eat more of this food for lunch, supper, or even at snack time.
- If there is no reaction to the re-introduced food it must be stopped at the end of that day to get ready to introduce another suspected food back into the diet the next day.
- If you think symptoms develop when you add a particular food back into the diet, but just aren't certain, then eat more of that food until the symptom or symptoms are obvious. Be

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sure to keep the rest of the diet the same as before. If there is an obvious reaction after eating any food, then don't ingest any more of that food. Wait until the reaction stops (may take up to 48 hours) before adding another food to test.

- When you do add back in foods it is always best to use certified organic ones, if possible, or make sure the food is in a pure form without added chemical and additives.
- Use whole milk rather than a milk product that contains wheat, sugar, and other possible allergic ingredients.
- A wheat product such as Cream-O-Wheat would be better than bread that contains milk, yeast, or some other intolerant ingredient.
- It is extremely important that no allergic foods be consumed during this test. An accidental or unknown intake of the allergen may precipitate a reaction. This diet plan must be carefully adhered to, particularly during the trial period. Conclusions derived from this test may be followed for the next several months or years. It won't be helpful if the results of these trials end in false conclusions.

If a food sensitivity is causing your symptoms, there will usually be improvement after eliminating the food. The symptoms usually return on the first day the food is eaten again. In some individuals the symptoms just will not return until the food is eaten in quantity for several consecutive days. Also, if you eliminate a food from a person's diet for several weeks or longer, there may be a tolerance to that food and larger quantities must be consumed for several consecutive days before any symptoms will reappear. More than one food sensitivity is usually involved. That is why the withdrawal of one food sensitivity may not make a significant difference if the other foods remain in the diet.

Now, you can introduce back into the diet those foods that did not cause any reaction when eaten on a continuous basis. When you test a food that has not been in your normal diet, be sure to eat it in excess. If you do not have a reaction after several weeks on the food, do not eat that food for four days and then test it again.

If there are obvious, bothersome reactions after eating a particular food, you can shorten the reaction time by giving 1 teaspoonful of a soda mixture. Make it with 2 parts baking soda and 1 part potassium bicarbonate. Also, Alka-Seltzer Gold (without aspirin) dissolved in a half glass of water is very effective. Give 2 tablets for anyone over 13 years old; give children ages 6 to 12 years old 1 tablet; 1/2 tablet for children 1 to 5 years old. A laxative such as milk of magnesia will help stop the reaction by removing the food from the intestinal tract where it is causing the problem.

If you are still experiencing symptoms using the above diet, then continue with the following elimination diet:

1. Most vegetables are permitted, but not corn, potatoes, or soy (legume) products.
2. Eat fruits, but not apples, bananas, or any citrus fruits; this includes fruit-sweetened products.

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3. Meats such as lamb may be eaten, but not beef, chicken and pork.
4. You can have grains, but not wheat, corn, soy, barley, or rye.
5. Eat nuts, but not peanuts or Brazil nuts.
6. Oils made of safflower, sunflower, or canola oil are usually non-allergic.
7. Drink only beverages containing bottled spring water or mineral water.
8. Avoid sugar or products containing sugar.
9. Avoid chocolate, coffee, tea, or alcohol.
10. Avoid eggs.
11. Avoid food coloring.
12. Avoid yeast-containing foods.

Avoid all foods that you eat regularly or more than once or twice a week. If you love a particular food and want it all the time, then that is one of the foods to eliminate during this diet. Avoid commercially prepared foods because they usually contain allergic-type additives and hidden ingredients. Eat simply and buy certified organic foods.

Keep any foods that caused definite reactions out of the diet. After several months of avoidance, you may build some tolerance to previously sensitive foods, if you only eat them occasionally. Remember, giving up your favorite food is usually not forever, just until the symptoms subside and the immune system has a chance to rest and rebuild. The stronger your immune system the faster health returns. Try to have at least 72 hours between times you eat the same food, and don't eat the same foods two days in a row. Symptoms will usually return if you begin eating the same way as before you began the avoidance diet. You may need to retest any food that doesn't show a clearly defined sensitivity.

Begin to add the eliminated foods that caused reactions back into the diet in about six months. Eat the food by itself in the morning, before eating anything else. If you show no symptoms it is probably safe to begin rotating the food back into your diet. If you react, then wait six months before you try the food again. Reintroduction of sensitive foods can produce a more severe reaction than before. Maintain a carefully detailed record describing when foods are re-introduced and any symptoms that occur. It may be helpful to use the pulse test method since the pulse often changes when a food sensitivity occurs.

If you tried all of the above elimination and challenge diets and they do not seem to eliminate the symptoms, then you might want to try one more elimination diet before giving up. You will need to limit your diet to rice, fish, and steamed vegetables for 10 days. It usually takes that long for any foods causing the problem to be eliminated from the body. Of course, don't eat these foods if you know they cause you problems. After this 10-day cleansing diet, re-introduce foods back into the diet one at a time as you did before.

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The good part of an elimination diet is that it may help you detect food sensitivities. The bad part is that it is time consuming and requires discipline and motivation. Of course, there is the possibility that your problem isn't caused by food sensitivities. An inadequate diet may overshadow food sensitivities because of the existence of deficiencies or an overload of refined carbohydrates such as sugar. For anyone who doesn't respond to the above program or has severe symptoms, then a visit to a physician trained in food sensitivities may be in order for a more comprehensive program, allergy tests, or food sensitivity testing.