

Food Allergies: A Source of Confusion

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One man's food is another man's poison. This is especially true of food allergy or sensitivity. Food allergy or sensitivity is one of the most confusing and frustrating causes of illness. The symptoms it produces are so different from one person to another.

Allergies tend to run in families. If one parent is allergic, their children have a fifty percent chance of developing food allergies. If both parents have allergies, a child has a seventy-five percent probability of having food allergies.

But what is an allergy? It is an abnormal reaction to a generally harmless substance which occurs in a predisposed person. It is caused by an antigen (allergen) or substance which produces an allergic reaction. When a person with an allergy is exposed to an allergen the body responds by producing antibodies. In order for an allergic reaction to occur, the body must produce enough antibodies. An allergic reaction results in the release of histamine and other chemicals causing the various allergic symptoms. The same allergen may produce diverse symptoms in different people. For example, a milk allergy may produce constipation, nasal congestion, in another, diarrhea, in another, headache and yet in another abdominal bloating and gas. Even in the same individual the reactions may vary greatly from time to time.

Some allergies depend on the amount of exposure to a food, beverage, inhalant or chemical. In addition to the amount of the offending food or substance if an inhalant allergen is also extremely high, the total load on the body is increased. Due to the increased total load, many times the body is less capable of handling the other offending food. For example, if you have a wheat allergy and you rotate your diet so you are only eating wheat in any form every four to five days, you may not have any reaction to it. But if you eat a wheat bran muffin for breakfast, whole wheat sandwich with chicken noodle soup for lunch and lasagna for dinner, you may cause a whooping reaction. Recall, that most noodles and pastas are made with flour which comes from wheat.

Symptoms of Food Allergy

Mental & Emotions:

Mood swings, anxiety, fear, anger, nervousness, irritability, aggressive behavior, depression, hyperactivity, panic attacks, listlessness, confusion, stuttering, poor memory/concentration, lethargy, speech problems and learning disorders, "binge" eating or drinking, food cravings.

Digestion:

Belching, indigestion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, cramps, heartburn, bloating, passing gas, feeling of fullness long after eating.

Activity & Energy:

Fatigue, sluggishness, drowsiness, lethargy, lack of energy, apathy, hyperactivity, restlessness, agitation.

Eyes, Ears & Nose:

Watery, itchy eyes, blurred vision (excluding vision disorders—far or near sightedness), ear infections, hearing loss, sneezing attacks, runny/stuffy nose, hay fever, sinus problems, excessive mucus formation, headache.

Throat & Mouth:

Coughing, sore throat, hoarseness, swelling/pain, sores on tongue, gums and lips, increased sinus drainage.

Heart & Lungs:

Rapid heart beat or increase > 10-15 beats, irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, chest pain, congestion, asthma, bronchitis, difficulty in breathing.

Muscles & Joints:

General weakness, muscle/joint aches and pains, arthritis, stiffness.

Skin:

Hives, rashes, dry skin, excessive sweating, acne, hair loss, irritation around eyes.

Other:

Excess weight, inability to lose weight, chronic fatigue, dizziness, water retention, insomnia, headaches, genital itch, frequent urination.

Note: Many health conditions may cause some of the above symptoms. Professional medical evaluation is recommended to establish if causes other than food allergy sensitivities are the cause.

Surprisingly, the foods that you are allergic to are the foods that you crave, want and eat the most frequently. This type of allergy is called an addictive allergy. Most people with food allergies or addictions are completely unaware that this process is taking place in their body. If an addicted person misses a meal that would normally include the food to which is allergic, allergic-addictive withdrawal symptoms appear. In order not to experience the discomfort of a withdrawal reaction, a person will continue to eat the food to which he is allergic to prevent withdrawal symptoms. There is a third type of allergy in which you have a fixed reaction to a food. Every time you eat it, you react no matter if the food is eaten with another food or if you only eat a small portion.

The five most common foods which cause food sensitivities are: eggs, wheat, corn, citrus (oranges) and milk. Other common foods include: peanuts, sugar, chocolate, tomatoes, chicken, beef, coffee, pork and soy.

If you suspect food allergies, keep a food diary and journal of how you feel. Note *any symptoms*. See if there is any pattern or if you are constantly craving or eating the same foods or food families.

Other methods to help you detect your food allergies include the ELISA food allergy panel (blood testing) and an elimination diet. Some allergy doctors use skin or scratch testing for foods. This method is only about twenty percent accurate. Some physicians do not believe that food can cause various symptoms, but they can.

Once your food allergies are determined, often the suspect foods need to be eliminated from your diet totally in any form for a month or two. Then the foods are *slowly* reintroduced one at a time. If you continue to get an allergic reaction, eliminate the food altogether. If you do not get a reaction, rotate the food so it is not eaten in *any* form except every fourth or fifth day. For example, if you drink milk on Sunday,

you would not use *any* dairy product until Thursday or Friday of that week. This gives the body a chance to eliminate and prevent any build-up in your system.

Please beware, some foods that do not cause a reaction alone, but may cause a reaction when combined. If you do get a food reaction, according to Doris Rapp, M.D., a good way to help reduce or stop a food reaction is by using Alka-Seltzer Gold Antacid Formula without aspirin (gold foil box) or Alka-Aid. Buffered Vitamin C or esterified Vitamin C in powdered form taken in water helps with a food reaction.

Keep in mind, a deficiency of magnesium causes the mast cells (cells which release histamine) to release more histamine. It is important to keep your level of magnesium up in the body.

Other nutritional supplements to consider with food allergies include:

- 1) Ester C - 2,000-5,000 milligrams daily, divided
- 2) Pantothenic Acid - 1,500 milligrams per day
- 3) Mag Link - four to six tablets per day, divided. If diarrhea occurs, decrease by one.
- 4) Anxiety Control 24 - three to six capsules per day divided.
- 5) Beta-Carotene - 10,000 - 50,000 I.U. per day.
- 6) Fortified Flax - one tsp. three times per day in juice.

For more information, try the following books:

Is This Your Child? by Doris Rapp, M.D.
Allergies & Your Family by Doris Rapp, M.D.
Food Allergies Made Simple by Phylis Austin

If you have difficulty locating these books, contact The Pain & Stress Center, 5282 Medical Drive Suite 160, San Antonio, TX 78229-6023

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