

# Good Eats

## Is Your Diet Making You Feel Bad?

Indigestion, headache, fatigue. Have you ever experienced these symptoms after eating a meal? An estimated 62 million Americans suffered from gastrointestinal ailments in 2006, according to Research and Markets, an international market-research firm. And while that number bodes well for the manufacturers of antacids, it's not so good for your body.

Overeating, eating rich foods or poor food combinations can cause adverse physical reactions. But, in some cases, there may be another culprit at work: Food sensitivity.

Food sensitivity is caused by an allergy or intolerance to a specific food or food product. A food allergy is an abnormal immune response to a food. An allergic reaction can range from an irritated mouth to a rash to a severe asthma attack. Even a trace amount of peanut oil, for example, can prove life threatening

to a child with this food allergy.

Allergic reactions occur within a few minutes to an hour after consuming the food in question. True food allergies are often genetic, and affect about 2 to 4 percent of adults and 6 to 8 percent of children.

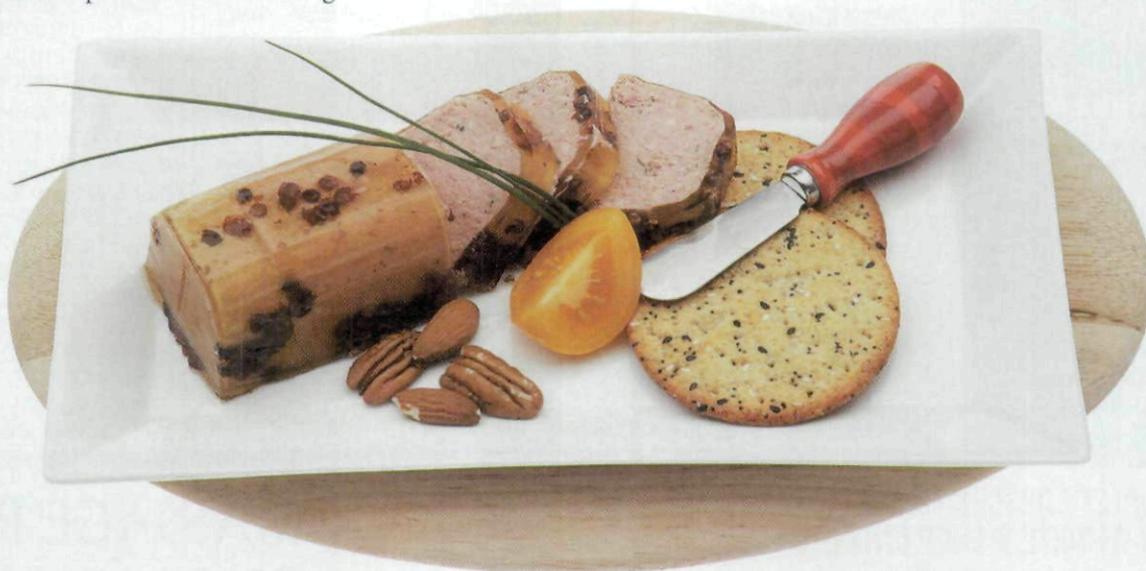
Many people confuse food *allergy* with food *intolerance*. Food intolerance is much more common than food allergy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, approximately 70 percent of adults have some degree of lactose intolerance.

Food intolerance occurs when the digestive system is unable to break down and metabolize a food product, and that food product acts as an irritant to the body. Symptoms include those of food allergies as well as migraines, joint pain, stomach bloating, swelling of the feet and mood swings. Food-intolerance symptoms

can occur within a few minutes to several days after consuming the food.

The top five most-common foods or food products behind allergies or intolerances include: proteins found in eggs, wheat, dairy, soy, peanuts, shellfish or corn; milk lactase (an enzyme); salicylates (naturally occurring preservative) in herbs, fruits and vegetables; purines (an organic chemical compound) in meats; and naturally occurring monosodium glutamate (MSG) found in tomatoes, peas and corn. In addition, food additives, such as preservatives, food coloring, artificial flavors and bleaching agents, can also cause adverse reactions.

Scientists have discovered that the more often a person is exposed to a food, the higher the risk for developing an intolerance to it. But simply avoiding the food in question may be more difficult than you think. Some of the foods most commonly



associated with sensitivities are “hidden” in other products. For example, milk proteins and sugars are added to lunch-meat, multivitamins, asthma inhalers and numerous prescription medications.

## Do you have a food sensitivity? Take this quiz to find out.

- Do you experience recurring headaches or migraines that are unrelated to stress?
- Do you feel bloated or experience diarrhea or constipation after eating certain foods?
- Do you have strong, recurrent food cravings?
- Do you get skin rashes, acne or eczema after you eat a certain food?
- Do you suffer from restless legs, joint or muscle pain unrelated to physical activity?
- Do certain foods leave you exhausted or extremely hyper for a few hours after eating them?
- Do you experience intermittent irritability, nervousness, depression or anxiety?
- Do you suffer from recurring yeast infections or candida?
- Do you experience chronic fatigue?
- Are you always sick with a cold, a sinus infection or have a persistent cough?
- Do you have digestive symptoms that impact your lifestyle, such as embarrassing flatulence or constant stomach pain?
- Do you suffer from edema or ringing in the ears after eating certain foods?

If you answered yes to the majority of the questions, you may want to talk to your physician or a nutritionist. They can help you determine if you have an allergy or intolerance to certain food(s), and teach you food-elimination techniques to ensure that your diet remains balanced with adequate nutrients.

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