

Food Allergy Elimination Diet Instructions

Elimination diets for suspected food allergies (sensitivities) need to be done in a very specific manner in order for them to be successful in determining your potential allergic food reactions.

There are two basic types of food allergies.

Type I hypersensitivity reactions (Anaphylactic types of allergies)

- Related IgE Immunoglobulins, effecting Histamine release in the affected tissue
- Symptoms occur immediately after ingestion in the affected tissue
- Can resolve quickly with appropriate treatments (anti-histamines, steroids, epinephrine, etc.)

Type II, III, IV hypersensitivity reactions (Delayed onset reactions)

- Related to IgG and IgA immunoglobulins, effecting a delayed antibody or cytokine reaction against the affected tissue
- Symptoms can occur shortly after ingestion OR up to several days after ingestion (due to delayed antibody production)
- Can require avoidance of the allergic food for several weeks before symptoms may begin to resolve (time for antibodies produced against the food to be eliminated from the blood stream)

This elimination diet protocol is designed to help identify the delayed onset type of sensitivity to foods. Type I anaphylactic reaction are often so immediate and intense that the cause and effect with the offending food is easy for the patient to figure out. With a Type II, III or IV food reaction you might eat a food one day and not have any symptoms for up to a week later. There is no obvious cause and effect with this type of reaction and there many people never figure out these reactions.

For example, someone could eat an allergic food today, and not experience any symptoms from that ingestion for up to a week later. Also, the antibodies produced to the one ingestion of the allergic food, can linger in the system for weeks and cause lingering symptoms. You can eat a food today, not have symptoms associated with it for up to a week later, and those symptoms caused by the antibodies can linger for several weeks after that one ingestion. You will likely never figure out the association between this sensitive food and your chronic symptoms.

If you happen to eat this food on a regular basis, and each time you eat it you produce a lingering low grade inflammatory response to it that can last for several weeks, the antibody responses in your system begin “over-lapping” each other, and your symptoms become ever present and chronic. Many of our low grade, chronic inflammatory related problems are associated with this delayed food sensitivity issue.

There are some key points to understand in order for the elimination diet to be successful in determining your food sensitivities.

1. The elimination needs to **completely** eliminate the suspected food protein. The immune system reaction to foods is a molecular response, meaning it literally only takes a molecular “dose” of the food antigen to get in the system, to create a million fold antibody reaction. You can’t just “reduce” the amount of the suspected offending food, you must eliminate it.
2. It can take up to **2 weeks** before you may begin to notice even subtle improvements. Don’t get discouraged early on in the program. When you eat a food you are allergic to, the antibody response to that ingestion will peak at about 7-10 days, and then will slowly begin to reduce. It’s when the antibodies are reduced in the system, that we begin to notice improvements.
3. You must assume **ALL** foods can contain your suspected food allergen, until you prove otherwise by reading ingredient labels of everything you eat. You have to ensure there are no hidden or unusual sources of your allergic food.
4. When you have completed your 4-6 week elimination diet, we don’t look for your symptoms to be cured or completely resolved. We look for subtle changes or improvements in your symptoms only. It can take up to 3-6 months to completely eliminate the antibodies from your system, so for extremely sensitive and allergic people, improvements in the initial phase might be minimal
5. When you have completed the initial phase of the elimination diet, **DO NOT** go and reintroduce all the suspected food allergens at once. This will negate all of the hard work you did in removing them the weeks prior. Re-introduction of the food needs to be in a very specific, time sensitive manner in order for you to determine which food or foods you are actually sensitive to. Discuss this with your Naturopathic physician to ensure you understand the specific details of your reintroduction schedule.

Steps of the Elimination Diet

1. Once you and your physician have determined your suspected food sensitivities (either through serological testing or symptom/diet assessment) Spend some time educating yourself as to where these foods are in your current diet, and prepare a list of alternatives. Prepare ahead of time for the diet. The internet has terrific resources for diet alternatives, recipes and such to suit any diet elimination.
2. Eliminate the offending food(s) completely for 4-6 weeks or a time determined sufficient by your and your physician.
3. When you have completed the elimination diet, follow up with your physician BEFORE re-introducing any foods to discuss your response the the diet. This is critical to assess improvements or lack there of with the diet, to determine if more time may be needed before reintroducing foods back into your diet, and to construct a Reintroduction Schedule designed to identify the specific food issue.

If you have eliminated more than one specific food type, the proper reintroduction of foods is required in order to differentiate which foods are reactive and which ones aren't.

Food Re-introduction Instructions

The critical stage of the Elimination diet is when you go to reintroduce the food(s) you have eliminated. This part needs to be done in a very prescribed and time sensitive manner, in order to decipher which food(s) you may be reactive to, and also which foods you may be intolerant to verses allergic to. Please discuss your food reintroduction schedule with your physician to ensure this stage is done correctly and will provide you with the food "information" the diet was designed to give you.

If you have eliminated multiple foods, and are feeling better, you may not be reactive to all the foods you have eliminated. This reintroduction is designed to help your determine which of the food(s) you eliminated are actually reactive foods.

Step One

Introduce a particular food item / group that you have eliminated. Eat a good healthy dose of this food for 3-4 days. Stop eating if you notice any type of reaction within those 3-4 days (Digestive, Skin, Pain, Energy, Mood, Anxiety, etc.) and don't continue with that particular re-introduction.

Step Two

If you don't notice any reactions within the 3-4 day reintroduction phase, then stop eating the food again, and wait for 11 days to see if any delayed reactions or symptoms occur during that time frame. Make notes of any unusual reactions and when they happened in relation to the food reintroduction. (each reintroduction will be a 2 week project)

If no reactions or symptoms occur during that 2 week period, you might not be reactive to that food. Leave this food out of the diet and proceed to the next food or food group to be reintroduced, and repeat steps one and two.

Keep repeating these steps with each food or food group that was eliminated.