

## **ELIMINATION DIET** **FOODS YOU MAY EAT**

**Legumes (beans)** - Includes soybeans, tofu, lentils, peas, chickpeas, navy beans, kidney beans, black beans, string beans, and others.

**Vegetables** - Use a wide variety. All vegetables except corn are permitted.

**Proteins** - Poultry and fowl, fresh fish, (such as tuna and salmon, packed in spring water). Shrimp and most canned or packaged shellfish (such as lobster, crab, oysters may contain sulfites and should be avoided. Canned tuna, salmon and other canned fish are OK. Beef and pork may be eaten unless specified otherwise. Lamb rarely causes allergic reactions, and may be used even when other meats are restricted. Also recommended are grain/bean casseroles (recipes in vegetarian cookbooks).

**Nuts and seeds** - Nuts and seeds, either raw or roasted without salt or sugar. To prevent rancidity, nuts and seeds should be kept in an air-tight container in the refrigerator. May also use nut butters from health food stores or from fresh ground nuts (this includes peanut butter if allowed, almond butter, cashew butter, walnut butter, sesame butter, and sesame tahini). Nut butters go well on celery sticks and crackers.

**Oils and fats** - Sunflower, safflower, olive, sesame, peanut, flaxseed (edible linseed), canola and soy oils. Use cold-pressed or expeller-pressed oils (available from health food stores), as they are safer for the heart and blood vessels. Do not use corn oil or "vegetable oil" from an unspecified source, as this is usually corn oil. Soy and sunflower or safflower margarine are OK from an allergy standpoint, but we do not consider margarine a desirable food, as there is evidence it may promote heart disease. It is acceptable to use margarine during the elimination and testing period. However, if you are not allergic to butter, we recommend it instead of margarine, once you have completed food testing. Also suggested are vegetable and bean spreads, instead of butter or margarine.

**Snacks** - Any food can be eaten as a snack, any time of day. Also suggested are celery, carrot sticks or other vegetables; fruit in moderation (no citrus); unsalted fresh nuts and seeds; Barbara's Granola Bars (from health food stores); wheat-free cookies (check ingredients).

**Beverages** - Herbs teas (no lemon or orange); spring water in glass bottles or clear plastic, seltzer (salt free); Perrier; pure fruit juices without sugar or additives (dilute 50:50 with water); almond nut milk (Nut Quick); soy milk without corn oil (such as Eden Soy Plain); Cafix, Inka and Roma may be used as coffee substitutes. **Tap water** contains chlorine, fluoride and other potentially allergenic chemicals. In some cases, distilled or spring water in glass bottles is the only water allowed. This would include water used for cooking. If tap water is eliminated, it should be reintroduced as if it were a test food. Restrictions on the type of water permitted will be made on a case by case basis.

**Thickeners** - Rice, oat, millet, barley, soy, kuzu or amaranth flours; arrowroot, agar.

**Spices and condiments** - Salt in moderation; pepper, herbal spices without preservatives, citrus or sugar; garlic, ginger, onions; catsup and mustard from the health food store (without sugar); wheat-free tamari sauce; Bragg liquid aminos; vitamin C crystals in water as a substitute for lemon juice.

**Miscellaneous** - Sugar-free spaghetti sauce; fruit jellies without sugar or citrus; soups such as split pea, lentil, turkey/vegetable, etc.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

**Do not restrict your calories!** Start with a good breakfast, eat frequently throughout the day, and consume at least 4 glasses of water per day. If you do not eat enough, you may experience symptoms of low blood sugar, such as fatigue, irritability, headache, and too-rapid weight loss. To ensure adequate fiber, eat beans, permitted whole grains, whole fruits and vegetables, homemade vegetable soup, nuts and seeds. Be sure to chew thoroughly, in order to enhance digestion.

**Plan your meals for the week. Take a list with you to the health food store.**

If your schedule is very busy and it is hard to think of what to fix, take some time before starting the diet to make a list of all of your favorite types of foods and possible meal plans. For ideas, look through cookbooks that specialize in hypoallergenic diets. Most meals can be modified easily to meet the requirements of the diet, without changing the meal plan for the rest of your family. When you go to the health food store, ask for assistance in locating “allowed” versions of breads, crackers, cereals, muffins, soups, etc. Some people find it helpful to prepare additional foods on the weekend, to cut down on thinking and preparation time during the week. If you need further assistance or ideas, talk with your diet counselor.

**Dining out:** Do not hesitate to ask questions or make requests. For instance, you could ask for fish topped with slivered almonds, cooked without added seasoning, butter or lemon. Get a baked potato with a slice of onion on top. Order steak or lamb chops with fresh vegetables, also prepared without added seasonings (with the exception of garlic & plain herbs). Use salad bars that do not use sulfites as a preservative, and bring your own dressing (oil and cider vinegar with chopped nuts/seeds and fresh herbs). Get into the habit of carrying pure water, snacks, seasonings, etc., wherever you go, to supplement your meals or to have something on hand if you start to get hungry.

**Withdrawal symptoms:** About one in four patients develops mild “withdrawal” symptoms within a few days after starting the diet. Withdrawal symptoms may include fatigue, irritability, headaches, malaise, or increased hunger. These symptoms generally disappear within 2-5 days and are usually followed by an improvement in your original symptoms. If withdrawal symptoms are too uncomfortable, take buffered vitamin C (calcium ascorbate - 1,000 mg in tablet form or 1/4 teaspoon of the crystals, up to 4 times a day) or 3/4 teaspoon of “alkali salts” (2 parts potassium bicarbonate, 1 part sodium bicarbonate) in water as needed, up to 3 times a day for several days. In most cases, withdrawal symptoms are not severe and do not require treatment. It is best to discontinue all of the foods abruptly (“cold turkey”), rather than easing into the diet slowly.

**Testing individual foods:** It may take 3 weeks for symptoms to improve enough to allow you to retest foods. However, it would be best to test the foods anyway, to rule out hidden offenders. Most patients do improve. Some feel so well on the diet that they decide not to test the foods. This could be a mistake. If you wait too long to retest, your allergies may “settle down” and you will not be able to provoke your symptoms by food testing. Then, you will not know which foods you are allergic to. If reintroducing certain foods causes a recurrence of symptoms, you are probably allergic to those foods.

**Food sources for testing.** Test pure sources of a food. Example: do not use pizza to test cheese, because pizza also contains wheat and corn oil. Do not use bread to test wheat, as it contains other ingredients. Organic sources are the best to use for testing, as you will not experience interference from pesticides, hormones or other additives which may be used in commercial preparations.

**Test one new food each day.** If your main symptom is arthritic pain, test one new food every other day. Allergic reactions to test foods usually occur within 10 minutes to 12 hours after ingestion. However, joint pains may be delayed by as much as 48 hours.

**Eat a relatively large amount of each test food.** For instance, on the day to test milk, add a large glass at breakfast, along with any of the other foods on the “permitted” list. If after one serving, your original symptoms come back, or if you develop a headache, bloating, nausea, dizziness, or fatigue, do not eat that food anymore and place it on your “allergic” list. If no symptoms occur, eat the food again for lunch and supper and watch for reactions. Even if the food is well tolerated, do not add it back into your diet until you have finished testing all of the foods. If you do experience a reaction, wait until your symptoms have improved before testing all of the foods. If you do experience a reaction, wait until your symptoms have improved before testing the next food. If you wake up the next morning with head or joint pain, nausea, or any other suspicious symptom, you may be experiencing a delayed reaction to the food you tested the day before. If you are uncertain whether you have reacted to a particular food, remove it from your diet and retest it 4-5 days later. You do not have to test foods you never eat. **Do not test foods you already know cause symptoms.**

**Foods may be tested in any order.** Begin testing on a day you are feeling well (without colds, unusual headaches, flu). Review the list of symptoms to watch for and keep a journal of how you feel.

**Dairy test** - Test milk and cheese on separate days. You may wish to test several cheeses on different days, since some people are allergic to one cheese but not another. It is usually not necessary to test yogurt, cottage cheese, or butter separately.

**Wheat test** - Wheatena (with no milk or sugar) or another pure wheat cereal, may add soy or nut milk.

**Corn test** - Use fresh ears of corn or frozen corn (without sauces or preservatives)

**Egg test** - Test the whites and yolks on separate days, using hard-boiled eggs.

**Citrus test** - Oranges, grapefruits, lemons, and limes. Test these individually on four separate days. The lemon and lime can be squeezed into Perrier or seltzer. In the case of orange and grapefruit, use the whole fruit.

**Frequently eaten foods** - Test tap water, if you have eliminated it, followed by those foods you have restricted (such as foods being consumed more than three times a week).

**Optional tests** - The following foods and beverages are considered undesirable, regardless of whether or not you are allergic to them. If any of them are not now a part of your diet, or if you are fully committed to eliminating them from your diet, there is no need to test them. However, if you have been consuming any of them regularly, it is a good idea to test them and find out how they affect you. Reactions to these foods and beverages may be severe in some cases. They should be tested only on days that you can afford to feel bad.

**Coffee and tea test (separate days)** - Do not add milk, non-dairy creamer or sugar. May add soy milk. If you use decaffeinated coffee, test it separately. Coffee, tea, decaffeinated coffee, and decaffeinated tea are separate tests.

**Sugar test** - Put 4 teaspoons of sugar in a drink or on cereal, or mix with another food.

**Chocolate test** - Use 1-2 tablespoons of pure baker's chocolate or Hershey's cocoa powder in a drink or mix with another food.

**Alcohol test (test this last)** - Beer, wine and hard liquor may require testing on different days, as the reaction to each may be different. Have 2 drinks per test day, but only if you can afford not to feel well that day and possibly the next day.

**Food additive test** - Buy a set of McCormick's or French's food dyes and colors. Put 1/2 teaspoon of each color in a glass. Add one teaspoon of the mixture to a glass of water and drink. If you wish, you may test each color separately.

**After the testing if finished, it is time to return to the office for a follow-up visit.** When you are within 10 days or so of completing your testing, call the office for an appointment. Bring your journal with you, so you may review your experiences with the doctor.

**Suggestions for ongoing self-help, if you are allergic to foods:**

**Rotation Diets:** If you have an allergic constitution and eat the same foods every day, you may eventually become allergic to them. After you have discovered which foods you can eat safely, make an attempt to rotate your diet. A four-day schedule is necessary for some severely allergic patients, but most people can tolerate foods more frequently than every four days. You may eventually be able to tolerate allergenic foods, after you have avoided them for 6-12 months. However, if you continue to eat these foods more frequently than every fourth day, the allergy may return.

Use common sense and consume a wide variety of foods. Do not just latch onto a few favorites. If you are rotating foods, be sure to avoid all forms of the food when you are on and "off" day. For instance, if you are rotating corn, be sure to avoid corn chips, corn oil, corn sweeteners, etc., except on the days that you are eating corn and corn products. It is not necessary to do strict food rotation during the elimination and retesting periods.

**Watch for other allergic reactions:** If you have an allergic constitution, you may be allergic to foods other than those you have eliminated and tested on this diet. Pay attention to what you are eating and if you develop symptoms, review your recent meals and try to identify what may be different in what you have eaten. You can then eliminate that food for two weeks and test it again, to see if you can provoke the same symptoms.

**Symptoms that may be due to food allergy:**

**General:** Fatigue, anxiety, depression, insomnia, food cravings, obesity

**Infection:** Recurrent colds, urinary tract infections, sore throats, ear infections, yeast infections

**Ear, Nose & Throat:** Chronic nasal congestion, postnasal drip, fluid in the ears, Menière's syndrome

**Gastrointestinal:** Irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, gallbladder disease

**Cardiovascular:** High blood pressure, arrhythmia, angina

**Dermatologic:** Acne, eczema, psoriasis, canker sores (aphthous ulcers), hives

**Rheumatologic:** Muscle aches, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis.

**Neurologic:** Migraines and other headaches, numbness.

**Miscellaneous:** Asthma, frequent urination, teeth grinding, bedwetting, infantile colic.

Note: most of these disorders have more than one cause, but food allergy is a relatively common and frequently overlooked cause.

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