

ELIMINATION DIET PROTOCOL

Prepared by J. David Forbes, M.D. - (adapted from Alan R. Gaby, MD and *Tracking Down Hidden Food Allergies* by William Crook, MD)

Purpose: To identify hidden food allergens/intolerances that may be causing some or all of your symptoms. During the elimination period, all common allergens are completely eliminated from the diet for 2-3 weeks. The goal during this period is to feel substantially better. After your symptoms improve, foods are added back, one at a time, to determine which foods provoke symptoms. **It is imperative that you do this elimination 100%.** If there are foods you are sensitive to, it will only take a small amount to keep your symptoms going. You will do 90% of the work and get none of the benefit. Remember, this is an experiment, not the diet you will have for the rest of your life. Its purpose is to gain crucial information and turn your relationship with food from an unconscious process to a conscious one. This information *will* serve you for the rest of your life. Be gentle with yourself and remind yourself that this is a big challenge. It is definitely not easy. You are to be congratulated for doing it!

SYMPTOMS THAT MAY BE DUE TO FOOD ALLERGY/INTOLERANCE:

- General: fatigue, anxiety, depression, insomnia, food cravings, obesity
- Infections: recurrent colds, urinary tract infections, sore throats, ear infections, yeast infections
- Ear, Nose and Throat: chronic nasal congestion, postnasal drip, fluid in ears, Meniere'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, 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.

FOODS YOU MUST AVOID:

- ❑ **DAIRY PRODUCTS:** milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, whey, casein, sodium caseinate, calcium caseinate, any food containing these.
- ❑ **WHEAT/GRAINS:** most breads, spaghetti, noodles, pasta, most flour, baked goods, durum semolina, farina, and many gravies, etc. Also, anything with gluten.
- ❑ **CORN:** including any product with corn oil, vegetable oil from an unspecified source, corn syrup, corn sweetener, dextrose, glucose, corn chips, tortillas, popcorn
- ❑ **REFINED SUGARS:** including table sugar and any foods that contain it: candy, soda, pies, cake, cookies, etc. Other names for sugar include sucrose, glucose, dextrose, corn syrup, corn sweetener, fructose, maltose and levulose. These must all be avoided. Some patients will be allowed 1-3 teaspoons per day of pure unprocessed honey, maple syrup or barley malt. This will be decided on an individual basis. Those restricted from all sugars should not eat dried fruit. Others may eat unsulphured (organically grown) dried fruits sparingly
- ❑ **SOY:** if you eat it more than 3x/week. If you do consume it, stick with whole forms: soybeans (edamame), soy nuts, tofu, tempeh. Avoid soy extracts in other products such as “energy bars” or protein mixes with isoflavones added.
- ❑ **“THE WHITES”:** White potatoes (sweet potatoes are ok), white bread, etc.

Others to consider and discuss with your health practitioner:

- ❑ **CITRUS FRUITS:** oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes, tangerines and any food containing citrus
- ❑ **COFEE, TEA, ALCOHOL:** must avoid both caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee, as well as standard (such as Lipton) tea and decaffeinated tea. Herb teas are OK, except those containing citrus
- ❑ **EGGS:** if you tend to have them more than twice per week
- ❑ **ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS:** aspartame and those used in sodas in particular. Stevia is a good option to use instead.
- ❑ **KNOWN ALLERGENS:** Avoid any food you know you are allergic to, even if it is allowed on this diet.



READ LABELS! Hidden allergens are frequently found in packaged foods. “Flour” usually means wheat; “vegetable oil” may mean corn oil and casein and whey are dairy products. Make sure your vitamins are free of wheat. Vary your diet, choosing a wide variety of foods. Do not rely on just a few foods as you may become allergic to foods you eat every day.

FOODS YOU MAY EAT

VEGETABLES: use a wide variety. All vegetables except corn are permitted

FRUITS: All (except citrus for certain individuals)

MAKE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES 75% OF YOUR DIET

25% OF DIET AS BELOW:

LEGUMES (BEANS): Includes soybeans, tofu, lentils, peas, chickpeas, navy beans, kidney beans, black beans, string beans, and others. Dried beans should be soaked overnight. Pour off water and rinse before cooking. Canned beans often contain added sugar or other potential allergens. Some cooked beans packaged in glass jars, sold at the health food store, contain no sugar. Read labels. May also use bean dips without sugar, lemon, or additives. Canned soups include split pea and lentil soup (without additives)

PROTEINS: poultry and fowl, fresh fish (fatty fish are best like salmon, tilapia, tuna, etc). 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 and 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 and in smoothies!

OILS AND FATS: Sunflower, safflower, olive, sesame, peanut, flaxseed, canola, and coconut oils. In general, don’t cook with olive oil. It can be used on low simmer, but not any higher. Use high-flashpoint oils such as coconut or peanut oil for cooking. Do not use corn oil or “vegetable oil” from an unspecified source as this is usually corn oil. Also suggested are vegetable and bean spreads instead of butter or margarine.

SWEETENERS: Stevia is the best. There are multiple forms now available. Usually you will obtain it in liquid drops or powder. Be aware that it is approximately 300 times as potent as



sugar. You may use as much as you wish, but add it VERY sparingly until you establish the amount needed to suit your taste. For instance, a standard-sized beverage will likely need somewhere between 3-5 drops.

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.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

ENERGY: Most folks will begin to feel better with the removal of the main items. However, if you are having issues with low energy, make sure that you are getting protein/fat in your meals. It will give you a much longer energy sustenance than carbohydrates.

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 your favorite types of foods and possible meal plans.

A great website is: <http://whfoods.org/recipestoc.php?#recipes>

It has a search engine for recipes that you can customize to exactly what you want or don't want in a meal.

For other ideas, look through cookbooks that specialize in hypoallergenic diets, Paleo diets, or thousands of websites that specialize in these issues. 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.

DINING OUT: Do not hesitate to ask questions or make requests. Most restaurants these days are well acquainted with customer's needs for allergen-free foods, especially gluten/wheat and dairy. For instance, you could ask for fish topped with slivered almonds, cooked without added seasoning, butter or lemon. Order steak and lamb chops with fresh vegetables, also prepared without added seasonings (with the exception of garlic and 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, nuts, seasonings, etc., wherever you go to supplement you meals or to have something on hand if you start to get hungry.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS: About one in four patients develop mild "withdrawal" symptoms within a few days after starting the diet. **This is almost always correlated with the degree of sugar in your diet as it is the most addictive.** 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 abrupt improvement in your original symptoms. Hang in there!

REINTRODUCTION OF FOODS

The process isn't complicated.

Basically, you are going to add the removed items slowly back one at a time to see what re-provokes symptoms.

TEST ONE NEW FOOD EVERY TWO TO THREE DAYS: You will be watching for a return of any previous recognizable symptoms (like the “sniffles”, gut bloating or discomfort, fatigue, “brain fog”, rash). If you have no reaction to the testing or you are back to feeling “clear”, then you can test as often as each day. Just make sure you're back to the baseline reached at the end of the experimental phase so that you can properly assess a change. 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.

Then go to another item and proceed as above. This is how you get your own “Body Map” of your body's relationship to food, what gives you energy and doesn't give you tiredness, tension, or toxicity.

TESTING INDIVIDUAL FOODS: It may occasionally take 2-3 weeks for symptoms to improve enough to allow you to retest foods. However, you may begin retesting after one week if you are sure you are feeling better. Most patients do improve. Some feel so well on the diet that they decide not to re-test the foods. It is a perfectly healthy diet for long-term for those who prefer it. 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. If you use wheat bread to test wheat, make sure it is 100% wheat with no other allergenic 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.

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. If you do experience a reaction, wait until your symptoms have improved before testing the next food. Make sure to give it 24-48 hours before you decide for sure that a food is a non-reactant. If you wake up the next morning with head or joint pain, nausea, or any other suspicious symptom, you may be experience 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 tests – test milk and cheese on separate days. You may have a difference in the sensitivity to these two basic dairy categories. 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 – Wheaten (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). Test pure corn and corn syrup as different items.
- 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.
- 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 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 tests (separate days) – do not add milk, non-dairy creamer, or sugar. 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 cocoa powder
- Alcohol test (test this last) – Beer, wine, and hard liquor may require testing on different days as the reactions 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.
- Food additive test – Buy a set of McCormick's or French's food dyes and colors. Put ½ 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.



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