

SURVIVING AND THRIVING WITH FOOD ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCES

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*For this handout and more information, visit
www.foodallergysurvivalguide.com*

Food allergy: a reaction of the body's immune system to a specific food component. This reaction involves the production of immunoglobulin E (IgE), an antibody that is typically tested in the diagnosis of food allergy.

Food intolerance: an adverse reaction to a food, food ingredient, or additive that does not involve the immune system. It typically involves the digestive system.

Food sensitivity: includes both allergy and intolerance.

Why are food allergies so much more prevalent now than they were years ago?

- Hygiene theory
- Pollution, contaminated food supply (pesticides, herbicides), contaminated water
- Poor quality diets (leading to poor health)
- Modern agricultural methods (GMO; e.g. StarLink corn)

Allergies CAN be outgrown – even 20% of peanut allergies eventually subside.

What are the most common allergens in the US?

- Milk/dairy
- Eggs
- Soy
- Wheat
- Finfish
- Shellfish
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts

Severe allergies (anaphylaxis) are most commonly associated with peanuts and shellfish.

Mild allergies and food intolerances are more subtle, and thus are often difficult to pinpoint:

- Dose-response issues
- Timing issues
- We typically eat a mixture of many foods and beverages
- Other factors may exacerbate symptoms (e.g. seasonal allergies, illness, etc.)
- Psychosomatic
- Medications, stress, and fatigue influence symptoms
- Food variation (freshness, origin, purity, and quality)

There are many complex relationships between food sensitivities and disease.

Our state of health can influence our response to foods, especially:

- The immune system
- The digestive system

Conditions often related to food allergies, that can be improved by dietary change:

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- ADHD
- Candida
- Dermatitis (eczema, psoriasis)
- Depression
- Digestive disorders
 - IBD (Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis)
 - Celiac disease
 - IBS
 - Sugar intolerance (lactose, fructose)
- Fatigue
- Migraines and other headaches

Do you have a food allergy or intolerance? Diagnosis is the most important step towards healing.

1. **Assess your symptoms.** Are they skin related? Gastrointestinal? How long have you had them? How severe are they? Do they happen at certain times? Do you notice a relationship with foods?
2. **Keep a food diary and symptom diary**, including a detailed list of all the foods eaten, when eaten, quantity of each food, the ingredient lists of packaged or restaurant foods, and a detailed report of symptoms, feelings, and reactions, including when they occur. Include foods placed in the mouth but not swallowed, such as chewing gum.
3. **If you suspect a true allergy, get a blood test.** Many clinicians start with a skin test, but the skin test itself may be dangerous. Keep in mind that allergy tests are not 100% accurate and must be followed by an elimination diet and food challenge.
4. **If you have migraine headaches or IBS**, and you cannot pinpoint problem foods, I recommend mediator release testing by LEAP (Lifestyle Eating and Performance). If you are interested in the test and nutritional followup/counseling, please email Dina at dina@foodallergysurvivalguide.com.
5. **Do a formal food elimination diet / food challenge.**
6. If a regular elimination diet is ineffective, the next step is the "few foods" elimination diet, where all foods are eliminated except for a few specific foods known to be hypoallergenic. The elimination lasts for no more than 2 weeks, and is followed by timed, measured re-introduction of foods, with careful attention paid to symptoms and reactions.

You've pinpointed the foods you are sensitive to. Now what?

1. Eliminate the foods.
2. Educate yourself on how to avoid hidden sources of the foods.
3. Use a whole-foods, vegan diet to maximize health and well-being.
4. Take appropriate steps to heal the intestinal wall and strengthen your immune system.
5. Take supplements, if indicated.

Gluten and wheat intolerance: an epidemic? Some quick facts:

- Gluten is found in barley, kamut, spelt, triticale, oats (controversial), rye, beer, barley malt, malt vinegar, soy milk sweetened with malt, and soy sauce (but not wheatgrass or buckwheat!)
- Celiac disease (CD), or gluten intolerance, is a multi-system, multi-symptom disease. It may be the most underdiagnosed common disease today, affecting 1 in every 130-200 people in North America.
- Diarrhea, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, nausea, reflux, mouth ulcers, chronic fatigue, bone and joint pain are common symptoms. Some people only have 1 or 2 symptoms such as diarrhea or chronic fatigue. However, some have no symptoms. CD can occur at any age and often is triggered after a viral infection, surgery, pregnancy or severe stress.
- Many people who seek help have been told by their doctors that they have IBS and/or a whole host of other problems except CD.
- Delay in diagnosis can result in development of a variety of conditions such as osteoporosis, increased risk for gastrointestinal malignancies, infertility, miscarriage and other autoimmune conditions.
- People with other autoimmune disorders/syndromes are at a higher risk to have CD or to develop it in the future. These include type 1 diabetes (5-10% have CD), autoimmune thyroid disease, arthritis, Sjogren Syndrome, Down's Syndrome and other conditions.
- Diagnosis involves a blood test and an intestinal biopsy. You must NOT be on a gluten-free diet when you get the tests.

Crispy Rice Bars

(From *Food Allergy Survival Guide*, page 357)

Yield: 16 squares

These crunchy, nutty squares make a delicious dessert or sweet snack.

2/3 cup (170 ml) brown rice syrup
1/4 cup (60 ml) sesame tahini, other seed butter (see page xx),
or almond butter
1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) vanilla flavoring
2 cups (500 ml) crisped rice cereal

Additions (choose one):

1/2 cup (125 ml) lightly roasted chopped almonds or walnuts
1/2 cup (125 ml) currants, raisins, or finely chopped apricots
1/2 cup (125 ml) non-dairy chocolate or carob chips

Grease an 8-inch square pan or mist it with nonstick cooking spray and set aside. Place brown rice syrup and nut or seed butter in a small saucepan and warm until the mixture is softened and smooth. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla flavoring.

Combine the cereal and the addition of your choice in a large bowl. Pour the warm mixture over the cereal mix and combine carefully using a wooden spoon. Work as quickly as possible (this is especially important if using chocolate or carob chips so they do not melt). Pack the mixture evenly into prepared pan, pressing gently with your fingers. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and chill until firm. Slice into squares and store in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Will keep for about 10 days.