

Food Allergies, Intolerances, and Sensitivities

There are several food reactions that may make life miserable in different ways. The reactions can be broad and, at times, hard to predict. Identifying different reactions to foods takes time, patience, and detective work. So, what are the types of food reactions you may experience?

Food Allergy is definitely one of the most severe forms of allergic reactions and may present as a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction minutes to hours from the consumption of allergenic food. The most common food allergens are peanuts (legumes), shellfish, nuts, and even eggs. If you exhibit the symptoms of food allergy, most likely, you have to avoid that allergen for the rest of your life and also carry an EpiPen with epinephrine that should be injected right away to prevent anaphylaxis and a possible death. Sometimes, testing IgE levels could be helpful to identify other foods that may cause food allergies, but usually, you find out about your allergic reaction from being exposed to the allergen such as peanuts, shellfish, eggs.

Food intolerances can be described as things that, for example, upset your stomach and may cause diarrhea, constipation, nausea, and bloating. For example, if you lack the enzyme lactase that breaks down lactose from dairy products, you may have developed food intolerance to dairy. In this case, the reaction develops a couple of hours from the ingestion of milk or milk products. If you find out that you are lactose-intolerant, you can still do great with hard cheeses and fermented yogurts/kefirs as the beneficial bacteria break down lactose to easily-digested simple sugars. If you have been diagnosed with SIBO (Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth) or IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), you may not be able to digest some very healthy foods like

broccoli, cauliflower, apples, garlic, onions or any other high in FODMAPs veggies and fruits. Sometimes, this extra-rich in fiber veggies can be your nemesis and will cause gastrointestinal discomfort. FODMAP stands for short chain oligosaccharide polymers of disaccharides (lactose), monosaccharides (fructose), and sugar alcohols (sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, and maltitol), fructose (fructans) and galactooligosaccharides. Everyone is different, so some tweaking, trial, and error are needed to figure out what can be causing your symptoms.

Food sensitivities are much more difficult to identify, because the manifestation of symptoms may take from several hours to several days. A lot of times these symptoms are hard to pinpoint too. The symptoms can be vague (joint pain, brain fog, diminished focus, rash, eczema, etc.), mild or severe. Meanwhile, you are eating other foods too, which makes it more difficult to figure out what is causing your symptoms. Even though the symptoms may be subtle and do not interfere with your everyday life, they do cause a constant low-grade inflammation in your body and may lead to the development of disease, weight gain, inability to focus, fatigue. The most common foods that cause inflammation and food sensitivities are gluten, dairy, eggs, shellfish, corn, soy, nuts, and legume peanuts.

How to Identify if You Have Food Sensitivities

The golden rule is to go through the Elimination Diet. In order to truly find out if your body reacts to certain allergens, you need to pull out the top 4-8 allergens for at least 6 weeks and reintroduce them afterward in a particular way. I recommend pulling out eggs, dairy, and gluten if you are not ready to plunge forward all the way and to take away all 8 allergens. After avoiding these foods for 6 weeks, you may start reintroducing them one food at a time. For example, you decide to reintroduce dairy first. You should eat dairy at least 2-3 times a day for 3 days and write down if you noticed

anything different (bloating, nausea, brain fog, etc.) If you DO notice some symptoms, pull the dairy from your diet again for 2-3 months and reintroduce it again after. Continue testing and re-introducing other foods you pulled from your diet in the same manner.

Even though the elimination diet is the gold standard, many people find it hard to take foods out of their diet without a lab test confirmation. In such a case, running IgG food sensitivities blood panel may be helpful to guide you in what foods to eliminate and reintroduce in 3 months. While you are eliminating the foods, do not forget to work on healing the gut and sealing tight junctions in the gut.

Food Sensitivities' Testing

If you see many food sensitivities on your blood test result, it means you have a high intestinal permeability (aka "leaky gut") and gaps between the cells within your intestinal lining let undigested egg, gluten or/and casein proteins to squeeze in between and leak into your blood. The place where inflammation happens depends on where those undigested proteins are lodged. Some people experience eczema, others joint pain, others have very vague symptoms of brain fog and inability to focus. I personally avoided a bunch of foods while healing my gut. Then I decided I needed some confirmation on which foods to avoid and ran a functional blood test that showed that I am sensitive to almonds and egg whites. I was very happy that there were only two foods that I had to avoid. The minute I eliminated almonds from my diet, my right thumb joint pain disappeared! Now it only shows up if I eat almonds that inadvertently sneak into my diet.

Should you need more help with managing the symptoms, testing for delayed food sensitivities, and finding out the underlying cause of impaired gut function/high intestinal

permeability/"leaky gut", schedule a consultation with Zhanna Tarjeft, FNP [Here](#).

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