

What are food sensitivities?

“One man’s food is another man’s poison”

Most people are familiar with food allergies and more and more people are becoming aware of food sensitivities and food intolerances. While food allergies can cause potentially life-threatening reactions, food sensitivity symptoms can be a little less obvious for some, but can significantly impact the quality of life for others.

“Food and chemical sensitivities are estimated to affect up to 50 percent of Americans. At times more subtle and difficult to spot than true “allergies,” sensitivities cause a wide range of very individualized symptoms, from a foggy head to unexplained diarrhea, that can significantly decrease your quality of life.”

Mercola.com

If you have a food allergy, chances are, you would have an immediate reaction because an allergy involves an immune response. With food sensitivities, the reaction is not always immediate, so it can be more difficult to pinpoint.

Note: you can have a negative result from a food allergy test, but still have a sensitivity that causes symptoms (one common symptom is IBS, but there are many more, like headaches, skin rashes, bloating, etc.).

“There is increasing evidence that food sensitivities are more common and have a wider and more varied impact on our health than previously realized. Although often equated with food allergies, food sensitivities

also include food intolerances which, unlike allergies, are toxic reactions to foods that do not involve the immune system and are often more difficult to diagnose.

Many of the symptoms of food sensitivities including vomiting, diarrhea, blood in the stool, eczema, urticaria (hives), skin rashes, wheezing and runny noses, are associated with an allergic reaction to specific foods. However, food sensitivities may also cause fatigue, gas, bloating, mood swings, nervousness, migraines and eating disorders. These symptoms, which are more commonly related to food intolerance, are less often associated with the consumption of food.

Clinical research is accumulating evidence that the sensitivity to food can also increase the severity of the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, asthma and other diseases normally not considered food related.” - www.theworldshealthiestfoods.com

Studies have also linked food sensitivities to conditions such as nutrient malabsorption, leaky gut, acne, IBS, joint pain, ADD and ADHD, anxiety, depression, brain fog, dizziness, and autoimmune conditions – and this list seems to be growing!

How do you know if may you have one or more food sensitivities?

Look at the list of symptoms above and see if any of them apply to you. You may also be dealing with symptoms that are not on the list. You'll want to journal/track your food and your symptoms for a few days to see what connections you can make. Many people have multiple food sensitivities so this isn't always easy, but it's a good place to start and definitely worth a try.

Keep a written journal. Use something as simple as a small notebook that you can have with you at all times for the next 2 weeks. Write down what you have at each meal and pay particular attention to how you feel within the next hour. Symptoms can take longer to manifest, but this is a good place to start. Be aware and tune in to how you feel. See if you can

discover a pattern of what you eat and how it affects you.

The 2 most common sensitivities are gluten (a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, triticale and spelt) and casein (a protein in dairy), but you can be sensitive to any food – fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat and seafood – you name it! Just because a food is supposed to be healthy, doesn't mean it's healthy for YOU. Do your best to tune into the clues your body is giving you and avoid the foods that you determine are causing problems.

In addition to gluten and casein, 3 more top offenders include:

- Corn
- Soy
- Eggs

Where should you begin? Good question!

There are newer blood tests that are reported to be very accurate in determining food sensitivities through Cyrex Labs. Check with your doctor to see if they do this type of testing and if not, look for a doctor that does. A functional medical doctor or a naturopathic doctor will most likely do this type of testing in their practice.

Another option is to do an elimination diet where you remove foods that most commonly cause reactions and once you've removed them for 30 days, start adding them back in 1 by 1 for 3 days (to allow adequate time to detect a reaction) and pay close attention to any symptoms you notice.

The only problem with this approach is that you may have a sensitivity to something that's less common (like a fruit or vegetable). If you don't have the resources for testing, an elimination diet would be a good place to start.

A good book to learn more on the subject is “The Virgin Diet Cookbook” by fitness and nutrition expert, JJ Virgin. In her book, she explains the signs and implications of food sensitivities and lays out a great eating plan to make an elimination diet much easier.

If you think you may have one or more food sensitivities, it’s best to find a practitioner that can guide you through testing and making appropriate dietary changes to help you feel better and reduce or eliminate your symptoms.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this document is for general information purposes only and is not a substitute for dietary or medical advice. Seek the care of your healthcare practitioner that specialises in this area to determine the best course of action for your needs.