

## Food Sensitivities and Your Health

Do you ever wonder why you feel sluggish and lethargic after eating meals? Do you experience digestive difficulties such as bloating, flatulence and acid reflux, or have you been diagnosed with a digestive disorder? Do you experience a 'foggy head' sensation with difficulty concentrating? Or, do you crave sweets and can't seem to lose weight? If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, you may have a food sensitivity. This can cause a variety of health related conditions, which are treatable with diet modifications.

A food sensitivity occurs when there is an adverse reaction in the body to a type of food being ingested. Most food sensitivities are triggered by the immune system and reactions can occur up to 72 hours after eating. Symptoms may include nasal/sinus congestion, excessive mucus production, acne, excema or hives, inflammation and pain, bloating and weight gain, diarrhea, fatigue, headaches, and a spaciness feeling with an inability to concentrate.

Food sensitivities develop as a result of frequent consumption of a particular food, impaired digestion, or early introduction of solid foods to infants.

Foods that are commonly involved in triggering sensitivities are wheat and dairy products, as they are typically consumed on a daily basis. Muffins, sandwiches, pitas, bagels, crackers, pasta, and even croutons on your salad all have one thing in common: they contain wheat. Since wheat is the main ingredient in today's fast paced lifestyle, it is fairly common for people to develop a sensitivity to it. Dairy products such as milk, cream, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, sour cream, and cottage cheese are also consumed on a daily basis and are therefore another main source of food reactions.

It is very important to read labels on any packaged or processed foods since some ingredients are hidden. Wheat products may be listed as gluten, vegetable starch or gum. Wheat products are often present in beer (malt is usually barley), whiskey, and gin (any drink containing grain neutral spirits). Wheat is also present in soy sauce, malt products, mayonnaise, cooked processed meat dishes, gravies, sausages, fried food rolled in flour mixtures, and thickening in ice cream or bottled condiments. Dairy products may be listed as casein, whey (protein powders), lactose, or caseinate. Other substances such as artificial colorings and flavorings, preservatives (sulfites, nitrites), and monosodium glutamate (MSG) are highly allergenic and are found in most commercially packaged foods including salad dressings or marinades, canned soups, frozen food dishes and more.

Repeated exposure to your allergenic foods can cause a wide variety of chronic health conditions including weight gain, digestive disorders (Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Celiac, Crohn's, Colitis), recurrent infections (ear, sinus, bladder), asthma, migraines, headaches, menstrual difficulties, and skin conditions (acne, excema, hives). Mental and emotional disorders including anxiety, depression, mental confusion, irritability and attention deficit disorder may also be aggravated by a food sensitivities.

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In order to determine whether you have a food sensitivity it is best to seek the guidance of a Naturopathic Doctor. Each symptom will be addressed in detail and the appropriate treatment will be prescribed. Evaluating your diet will enable the practitioner to determine which foods you may be sensitive to and should be avoided. Also, specific blood tests are available and can be done to determine food sensitivities.

Eliminating foods that may cause allergic reactions will give your body a chance to heal and clear itself from the aggravating substance. Once a food sensitivity has been determined, it is advisable to eliminate the aggravating substance and make it a lifestyle change.

There are delicious substitutes for wheat and dairy products that are available at your local health food stores. Don't wait to feel better - there is no better time to start than now.