

Elimination Diet

An elimination diet is used to learn whether or not certain foods may be causing your symptoms or making them worse. If they are, the diet also can become a way to treat these symptoms.

There are four main steps to an elimination diet:

Step 1 – Planning

Work with your health care practitioner to learn which foods might be causing problems. You may be asked to keep a diet journal for a week, listing the foods you eat and keeping track of the symptoms you have throughout the day. (See the last page of this handout for a chart you can use). It is helpful to ask yourself a few key questions:

- What foods do I eat most often?
- What foods do I crave?
- What foods do I eat to “feel better”?
- What foods would I have trouble giving up?

Often, these seem to be the foods that are most important to try not to eat. See page 2 for a list of the most common problem foods.

Step 2 – Avoiding

For **two weeks**, follow the elimination diet without any exceptions. Don't eat the foods whole or as ingredients in other foods. For example, if you are avoiding all dairy products, you need to check labels for whey, casein, and lactose so you can avoid them as well. This step takes a lot of discipline. You must pay close attention to food labels. Be particularly careful if you are eating out, since you have less control over what goes into the food you eat.

Many people notice that in the first week, especially in the first few days, their symptoms will become worse before they start to improve. If your symptoms become severe or increase for more than a day or two, consult your health care practitioner.

Step 3 – Challenging

- If your symptoms have not improved in two weeks, stop the diet and talk with your health care practitioner about whether or not to try it again with a different combination of foods.
- If your symptoms improve, start “challenging” your body with the eliminated foods, one food group at a time. As you do this, keep a written record of your symptoms.

To challenge your body, add a new food group every three days. It takes three days to be sure that your symptoms have time to come back if they are going to. On the day you try an eliminated food for the first time, start with just a small amount in the morning. If you don't notice any symptoms, eat two larger portions in the afternoon and evening. After a day of eating the new food, remove it, and wait for two days to see if you notice the symptoms.

If a food doesn't cause symptoms during a challenge, it is unlikely to be a problem food and can be added back into your diet. However, don't add the food back until you have tested all the other foods on your list.

NOTE: If a food causes you to have an immediate allergic reaction, such as throat swelling, a severe rash, or other severe allergy symptoms, seek medical care and avoid food challenges unless you are directly supervised by a physician.



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Example of an Elimination Diet Calendar

Day Number	Step
1	Begin Elimination Diet
2-7	You may notice symptoms worse for a day or two
8-14	Symptoms should go away if the right foods have been removed
15	Re-introduce food #1 (for example, dairy)
16-17	Stop food #1 and watch for symptoms*
18	Re-introduce food #2 (for example, wheat)
19-20	Stop food #2 again and watch for symptoms
21	Re-introduce food #3
And so on

*You only eat a new food for one day. Do not add it back into your meal plan again until the elimination diet is over.

Step 4 – Creating A New, Long-Term Diet

Based on your results, your health care practitioner can help you plan a diet to prevent your symptoms. Some things to keep in mind:

- This is not a perfect test. It can be confusing to tell for certain if a specific food is the cause. A lot of other factors (such as a stressful day at work) could interfere with the results. Try to keep things as constant as possible while you are on the diet.
- Some people have problems with more than one food.
- Be sure that you are getting adequate nutrition during the elimination diet and as you change your diet for the long-term. For example, if you give up dairy, you must supplement your calcium from other sources like green leafy vegetables.
- You may need to try several different elimination diets before you identify the problem foods.

Modified elimination diet (dairy and gluten free)*

The most common food proteins that can cause intolerance are cow's milk protein and gluten from wheat. A modified elimination diet removes dairy and gluten and any other specific foods that may be craved or eaten a lot.

- Eliminate all dairy products, including milk, cream, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, butter, ice cream, and frozen yogurt.
- Eliminate gluten, avoiding any foods that contain wheat, spelt, kamut, oats, rye, barley, or malt. This is the most important part of the diet. Substitute with brown rice, millet, buckwheat, quinoa, gluten-free flour products, or potatoes, tapioca and arrowroot products.

Other foods to Eliminate

- Eliminate fatty meats like beef, pork, or veal. It is OK to eat the following unless you know that you are allergic or sensitive to them: chicken, turkey, lamb, and cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines and halibut. Choose organic/free-range sources where available.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine and all products that may contain these ingredients (including sodas, cold preparations, herbal tinctures).
- Avoid foods containing yeast or foods that promote yeast overgrowth, including processed foods, refined sugars, cheeses, commercially prepared condiments, peanuts, vinegar and alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid simple sugars such as candy, sweets and processed foods.
- Drink at least 2 quarts of water per day.



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Food group	Allowed	Avoid
meat, fish, poultry	chicken, turkey, lamb, cold water fishes	red meat, processed meats, eggs and egg substitutes
dairy	rice, soy and nut milks	milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt
legumes	all legumes (beans, lentils)	none
vegetables	all	creamed or processed
fruits	fresh or juiced	strawberries and citrus
starches	potatoes, rice, buckwheat, millet, quinoa	gluten and corn containing products (pastas, breads, chips)
bread/cereals	any made from rice, quinoa, amaranth, buckwheat, teff, millet, soy or potato flour, arrowroot	all made from wheat, spelt, kamut, rye, barley
soups	clear, vegetable-based	canned or creamed
beverages	fresh or unsweetened fruit/vegetable juices, herbal teas, filtered/spring water	dairy, coffee/tea, alcohol, citrus drinks, sodas
fats/oils	cold/expeller pressed, unrefined light-shielded canola, flax, olive refined oils, salad dressings, pumpkin, sesame, and walnut oils	margarine, shortening, butter, and spreads
nuts/seeds	almonds, cashews, pecans, flax, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower seeds, and butters from allowed nuts	peanuts, pistachios, peanut butter
sweeteners	brown rice syrup, fruit sweeteners	brown sugar, honey, fructose, molasses, corn syrup

NOTE: If you are using the elimination diet for Irritable Bowel Syndrome, consider eliminating the following foods for two weeks: dairy (lactose), wheat (gluten), high fructose corn syrup, sorbitol (chewing gum), eggs, nuts, shellfish, soybeans, beef, pork, lamb.



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Some helpful tips

A number of foods can be 'disguised' when you look at food labels.

If you are avoiding	Also avoid
Dairy	Caramel candy, carob candies, casein and caseinates, custard, curds, lactalbumin, goats milk, milk chocolate, nougat, protein hydrolysate, semisweet chocolate, yogurt, pudding, whey. Also beware of brown sugar flavoring, butter flavoring, caramel flavoring, coconut cream flavoring, "natural flavoring," Simplese.
Peanuts	Egg rolls, "high-protein food," hydrolyzed plant protein, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, marzipan, nougat, candy, cheesecake crusts, chili, chocolates, pet food, sauces.
Egg	Albumin, apovitellin, avidin, béarnaise sauce, eggnog, egg whites, flavoprotein, globulin, hollandaise sauce, imitation egg products, livetin, lysozyme, mayonnaise, meringe, ovalbumin, ovoglycoprotein, ovomucin, ovomucoid, ovomuxoid, Simplese.
Soy	Chee-fan, ketjap, metiaua, miso, natto, soy flour, soy protein concentrates, soy protein shakes, soy sauce, soybean hydrolysates, soy sprouts, sufu, tao-cho, tao-si, taotjo, tempeh, textured soy protein, textured vegetable protein, tofu, whey-soy drink. Also beware of hydrolyzed plant protein, hydrolyzed soy protein, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, natural flavoring, vegetable broth, vegetable gum, vegetable starch.
Wheat	Atta, bal ahar, bread flour, bulgar, cake flour, cereal extract, couscous, cracked wheat, durum flour, farina, gluten, graham flour, high-gluten flour, high-protein flour, kamut flour, laubina, leche alim, malted cereals, minchin, multi-grain products, puffed wheat, red wheat flakes, rolled wheat, semolina, shredded wheat, soft wheat flour, spelt, superamine, triticale, vital gluten, vitalia macaroni, wheat protein powder, wheat starch, wheat tempeh, white flour, whole-wheat berries. Also beware of gelatinized starch, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, modified food starch, starch, vegetable gum, vegetable starch.

Modified from Mahan LK and Escot-Stump S, *Krause's Food Nutrition and Diet Therapy*, 11th ed. Philadelphia: Saunders. 2004.)

If you are allergic to latex, you may also react to: apple, apricot, avocado, banana, carrot, celery, cherry, chestnut, coconut, fig, fish, grape, hazelnut, kiwi, mango, melon, nectarine, papaya, passion fruit, peach, pear, pineapple, plum, potato, rye, shellfish, strawberry, tomato, wheat.



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The information in this handout is for general education. It is not meant to be used by a patient alone. Please work with your health care practitioner to use the information in the best way possible to promote your health.

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NOTES

A ONE WEEK FOOD DIARY CHART

(LOG IN FOODS EATEN AND TIMES. NOTE THE SYMPTOMS YOU HAVE AND WHAT TIMES AS WELL)

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
MORNING FOODS							
MORNING SYMPTOMS							
AFTERNOON FOODS							
AFTERNOON SYMPTOMS							
EVENING FOODS							
EVENING SYMPTOMS							