

Are the Foods You Eat Making You Sick?

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We have all heard the expression “you are what you eat”. Unfortunately, we tend to crave and eat the foods to which we are intolerant. Eating these foods everyday can cause sensitivities for us, leading to profound effects on our physical and mental health. The foods that we are intolerant to are usually the foods that cause weight gain, digestive disorders, and skin disorders among other ailments. Eating these “reactive” foods over time can have profound long-term effects on our physical and mental health.

Food intolerance is a delayed immune response to food. The response can occur over several hours, or days after eating the offending food. Food sensitivities can cause unpleasant symptoms and is associated with a host of chronic conditions including: Celiac Disease, IBS, Colitis, Gastroenteritis, Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis, Urticaria, Dermatitis, Migraines, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, ADD, ADHD, Chronic Otitis Media, Recurrent Aphthous Stomatitis, Fibromyalgia, Rheumatoid Arthritis, among others.

People may suffer from food allergies, or from food intolerances and sensitivities.

With allergies, the offending food will cause an immediate reaction ranging from hives, swelling, or sneezing to anaphylactic shock. This is caused by an allergic antibody called IgE (immunoglobulin E), which is increased dramatically following the release of histamine from mast cells as a result of exposure to the offending food or allergen.

Food sensitivities, on the other hand, cause a delayed immune response. The offending food may take a few hours or up to a few days to cause a reaction. For example, egg or toast eaten one day may cause a headache or joint pains several days later. Intolerance to certain foods may be caused by an enzyme deficiency or chemical sensitivity as well as an immune response caused by food specific IgG antibodies. Since the reaction is delayed, and reactions are varied, it is often difficult to find the offending food without the use of laboratory testing. Antibodies are known as 'Immunoglobulins' or “Igs” for short. Each individual has their own unique reaction to foods due to their own particular digestive process, their own history of specific intestinal infections, medications, parasites and their individual diet. As antibodies against the food appear in the blood, it triggers an immune reaction to substances that adversely affect the organism. Over time, these antibodies may form immune complexes, which are deposited in joints and other organs and may be responsible for many of the symptoms that are related to food sensitivity.

The effects of food sensitivities have become more and more recognized, however, it wasn't until 1994 that the Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) method for food IgG antibody detection was developed. This test has revolutionized the field of food sensitivity treatment. A pinprick sample of blood is tested by measuring food specific IgG and looking for an increase in IgG against that specific food. An increase in IgG is the body reacting to the specific food by making antibodies against it. The technique of ELISA is considered the best method for detecting antibody reactions to foods and this test has helped many people improve their health and quality of life. Although most of us will figure out which foods cause an immediate reaction, it is almost impossible to figure out which foods cause a delayed reaction without the proper testing. Many patients have come to my office complaining of varied health problems, which they have been able to overcome simply by finding out which foods they are sensitive to and eliminating those foods.