

A Small Change of Diet Could Change Your Life Just Within Days

By Dr. Sanjida Ahmed *



We often suffer from chronic health problems without knowing the reason. Sometimes the symptoms are hard to explain and seem unconnected to a cause. Melanie Thompson, a resident of Dubai for the last 15 years was suffering from unknown sickness, including feeling unnecessarily tired and overweight. After years of poor health, she discovered that she is intolerant to wheat. Now that she knows, makes all the difference. It is easier for her to avoid problem foods. She is slim, healthy and full of energy- persistent health problems have disappeared. She never thought a simple diet change could make her life so much better.

Like Melanie, many of us may bear intolerance to certain foods which were never been identified. The precise distinction between food intolerance and a food allergy is often missed. A true food allergy requires the presence of IgE antibodies against the food. Food intolerances can involve the immune system, usually mediated by IgG antibodies.

Non-IgE-mediated food hypersensitivity (food intolerance) is more chronic, less acute, less obvious in its presentation, and often more difficult to diagnose than a food allergy. Symptoms of food intolerance vary greatly, and can be mistaken for the symptoms of a food allergy.

While true allergies are associated with fast-acting immunoglobulin IgE responses, it can be difficult to determine the offending food causing food intolerance because the response generally takes place over a prolonged period of time. Thus the causative agent and the response are separated in time, and may not be obviously related.

Food intolerance symptoms usually begin about half an hour after eating or drinking the food in question, but sometimes symptoms may delay up to 48 h.

Common Food Intolerances

- **Lactose Intolerance:** Lactose intolerance is caused by a deficiency of the enzyme, lactase, needed to digest lactose (milk sugar). Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk and milk products,

available at most supermarkets, Soy milk and other products may be helpful to these people.

- **Egg Intolerance:** This type of reaction occurs within minutes of eating an egg. Symptoms include, rashes and swelling on the face and around the mouth. Many food products, like cakes, bread, mayonnaise and custard, contain egg or egg proteins, so need to be vigilant about checking ingredients labels before one should buy them.

- **Wheat Intolerance:** The bowel affliction celiac disease is the main form of wheat intolerance. It affects who are intolerant to gluten, a protein present in wheat, rye, barley, and possibly oats. People with celiac disease need to follow a strict, lifelong, gluten-free diet. Gluten free foods are recommended for these people as most major supermarkets possess.

Symptoms of Food Intolerance

- **Respiratory symptoms:** Coughing, sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, wheezing, asthma, ear infections, snoring, pneumonia, bronchitis.

- **Neural Symptoms:** Poor co-ordination, clumsiness, headache, migraine, depression, memory problems, learning or cognitive difficulties, dementia.

- **Immune System Symptoms:** Catching colds and infections easily, urinary tract infections, mouth ulcers, recurring yeast (*Candida*) fungal infections long recovery from viruses, long healing period for sores.

- **Skin, hair and nails:** Eczema, dry flaky skin, psoriasis, dermatitis, hives, rosacea, rashes, hair loss, split and cracked nails, poor complexion, dandruff.

- **Metabolism Problem:** Mood swings, overweight, underweight, obesity, chills, thyroid disease, cravings, addictions.

- **Musculo-skeletal Symptoms:** Back and neck problems, stiff muscles or joints, tendonitis, arthritis, bone fractures.

- **Malabsorption:** Extreme tiredness and lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, vitamin deficiencies, iron deficiency, anemia, calcium deficiency, bone thinning, osteoporosis.

- **Gastro-intestinal Conditions:** Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), diarrhea, constipation, excessive flatulence, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), chronic indigestion, gastro-esophageal reflux (GERD), stomach ulcers, bowel polyps or bowel cancer.

- **Genital and Reproductive Conditions:** Infertility, difficulty conceiving, miscarriage, stillbirth, impotence.

Although not life threatening like food allergy, food intolerance should never be underestimated as its impact on sufferers can be significant, severely impacting on their ability to live normal healthy lives. Food intolerance is extremely widespread and many people with food intolerance experience more than one symptom. Symptoms can often be vague and the root cause of the problem, food, is not always correctly diagnosed. Correct diagnosis which can detect food specific IgG antibodies can help with the subsequent elimination of problem foods.

These minor changes of diet to exclude foods causing obvious reactions may be adequate without the need for professional assistance. Persons unable to isolate foods and those more sensitive or with disabling symptoms should seek expert medical and dietitian help.

Guidance can also be given to the general practitioner to assist in diagnosis and management. Food elimination tests can be carried on the patients to identify the problem food and chemicals. Once all food chemical sensitivities are identified a dietitian can advise an appropriate diet for the individual to avoid foods with those chemicals. A dietitian will ensure that adequate nutrition is achieved with safe foods and supplements if need be. ■

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وإن لم يكن يشكل خطراً على الحياة مثل حساسية الطعام، لا ينبغي أبداً التقليل من خطورة خلل عدم تحمل الطعام إذ يمكن لهذه المشكلة الهضمية أن تؤثر بشدة على قدرة المرضى في عيش حياة صحية وطبيعية. ينتشر خلل عدم تحمل الطعام على نطاق واسع للغاية وكثير من الناس المصابين به يعانون من الكثير من الأعراض التي غالباً ما تكون غامضة والسبب الجذري للمشكلة، أي الطعام، لا يكون دائماً معروفاً. بفضل التشخيص الصحيح الذي يكشف عن الأجسام المضادة يمكن تحديد أي أطعمة هي غير ملائمة.