

Food Sensitivities

Definition

Food sensitivity occurs when a person experiences symptoms after eating a food that is tolerated by most people. Food sensitivities can be classified as:

	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Food Allergy</i>	Food allergy results when the immune system reacts to a food or food ingredient. The immune system launches an attack when the offending food is consumed. Chemical substances are released that may cause a reaction in the skin, digestive system, respiratory and/or cardiovascular systems. A variety of symptoms can occur minutes to several hours after eating. Reactions can range from mild to severe, the most severe being anaphylaxis.
<i>Food Intolerance</i>	Food intolerance is a reaction to a food or food ingredient that does not involve the immune system. The intolerance may be caused by low levels of digestive enzymes or an abnormal sensitivity to certain substances in foods.
<i>Celiac Disease</i>	This is life-long condition that affects both children and adults with a genetic predisposition to react to gluten (the protein found in wheat, rye and barley). Gluten triggers an autoimmune toxic reaction and can result in a wide variety of symptoms.

Diagnosis

It is essential to see your physician for an accurate diagnosis as food sensitivity symptoms can be caused by other conditions. A variety of tests may be ordered to help determine the cause of your symptoms. Skin tests and blood tests (RAST) provide useful information, but do not always provide a definitive diagnosis. It is important that the results of these tests be interpreted by a qualified physician. An elimination diet and food challenge may be necessary to pinpoint the offending food(s). This should be supervised by your physician and registered dietitian.

It is important to determine which foods and the amount of food that triggers your symptoms. All traces of the offending food must be avoided with severe food allergies and celiac disease. However, people with food intolerances may be able to consume small amounts of the offending food without any symptoms.

Treatment

Following a restricted diet can be very difficult. A registered dietitian can help you:

- Plan suitable meals
- Read labels to determine which foods to avoid
- Eat nutritiously!!

Food sensitivities are often over diagnosed and restricted diets are followed unnecessarily. This can lead to poor nutritional intake, social isolation and increased food preparation time. For children, it is critical that their diets not be restricted so that proper growth and development can occur. As indicated above, it is important to work towards an accurate diagnosis.

Further Resources

Organization	Description
Food Allergy	
Allergy Asthma Information Association www.aaia.ca	The AAIA is a non-profit organization that provides information to help people cope with food allergies and asthma. There are a few good articles posted on the website. Regular newsletters are available when you purchase a membership. Four excellent pamphlets: milk, egg and peanut/nut allergies and anaphylaxis are available free of charge. There are local chapters throughout Canada. Cookbooks and other helpful resources are available.
Anaphylaxis Network of Canada www.anaphylaxis.org	This organization is dedicated to anaphylactic food allergies. The website provides reprints from media articles and links to relevant research journal articles. Regular newsletters are available when you purchase a membership.
Calgary Allergy Network www.calgaryallergy.ca	This website is associated with the AAIA. It provides a variety of well written articles related to asthma and severe food allergies.
Canadian Food Inspection Agency www.inspection.gc.ca	<p>Allergy alert subscription service http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/tools/listserv/listsube.shtml?foodrecalls_rappelsaliments</p> <p>Index of Food Recalls http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/recarapp/recaltoce.shtml</p> <p>Allergy alerts and food recalls pamphlet, poster and bookmark http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/educ/alerte.shtml http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/educ/postaffe.pdf</p> <p>Oral allergy syndrome fact sheet http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/foodfacts/orale.shtml</p> <p>Labelling of foods causing allergies and sensitivities http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/labeti/allerg/allerge.shtml</p>
Canadian Health Network www.canadian-health-network.ca	Many good articles on a variety of topics.

The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network www.foodallergy.org	FAAN is a large American organization dedicated to educating and raising awareness about food allergies. Regular newsletters are available when you purchase a membership. Many good practical resources are for sale from the website.
Food Allergy News www.foodallergynews.com	Private website of the author of this fact sheet. Four basic articles on food sensitivities are available on the website. Information on nutrition counseling services is listed.
Celiac Disease	
Canadian Celiac Association www.celiac.ca	The website contains good general information on celiac and related diseases, and selected articles from past newsletters. Regular newsletters are available when you purchase a membership. There are local chapters throughout Canada.
Gluten Free Diet www.glutenfreediet.ca	<i>The Gluten-Free Diet. A Comprehensive Resource Guide</i> was written by registered dietitian, Shelley Case. It is an excellent resource for the gluten-free diet. The website has information on ordering this book.

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