

## UNDERSTANDING FOOD ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCES (PART ONE)

BY MARY JO KURTZ

If you're raising children you're well aware of the ever increasing amount of children who are being diagnosed with food allergies. In the past, this was less common. We would occasionally find infants and toddlers who would experience severe reactions to certain foods. However, many would eventually outgrow these responses. Although today it's become common to have children in our schools that have severe food allergies that require special accommodations.

So, what is a food allergy? A food allergy represents an improper immune system response to a food when it enters the body. The immune system identifies the food as harmful and releases histamines and other chemicals. This causes the allergic symptoms that we see. These can range from rashes and swelling to shortness of breath.

For many people there is another level of allergies called food intolerances. Food intolerances are not an immune system response but are when the body is unable to digest and absorb certain foods. Two of the most common are lactose intolerance and celiac disease. Unfortunately, reactions caused by food intolerances are not as obvious as the allergic reactions we talked about above. However, they can continue undiagnosed for many years. Symptoms such as headaches/migraines, nausea, gas, bloating, irritable bowel and others often are experienced. As a result, these symptoms over the long term can affect the body and contribute to serious health issues.

If you are experiencing an undiagnosed health condition it could be related to either a food allergy or intolerance. Unfortunately the only way to determine this conclusively is to eliminate the food from your diet. As you can imagine, this is not an easy task. However, once discovered, the symptoms often end. Then with proper nutrition many of the effects can be reversed.

## UNDERSTANDING FOOD ALLERGIES AND INTOLERANCES (PART TWO)

Last month we discussed food allergies and intolerances. If you experience unexplained headaches/migraines, nausea, gas, bloating, irritable bowel or another chronic condition our information may have struck a chord with you. While these conditions can be bothersome or worrisome for adults, as a parent with a child suffering from any of these conditions it can be much worse. And now new data suggests that some childhood conditions such as ADHD, autism, and asthma may be related to food allergies and intolerances. We cannot stress enough that any symptom, even something minor, over the long term can affect the body and contribute to serious health issues.

The most common food sensitivities are to shellfish, eggs, milk, peanuts, soy and wheat or gluten. In addition to these foods, there are lesser ingredients that are added to processed foods that could be the real cause and much more difficult to discover. These may include sulfites or other food additives that are used to enhance taste, color and even shelf life of foods. Some examples of commonly known offenders are yellow dye #5 and MSG.

Unfortunately the only way to determine if a condition is food related is to eliminate the food or, in some cases, the chemical from your diet. As you can imagine, this is not an easy task and is one of the primary reasons people give up trying to find an answer. This is especially difficult for parents to do with children. However, once food intolerances and allergies are discovered the symptoms often end. And with proper nutrition many of the effects can be reversed.

We developed our 7 Day Elimination Diet, part of our Jump Start Program, to support our clients through this difficult process. We support you to eliminate possible culprits and guide you to begin listening to your body. This is critical in discovering which foods can heal and sustain you best. Every person is different and our individualized approach enables us to assist you to develop a life-long eating plan that will help you feel vibrant again. Our clients who have completed the program have lost weight, cleared up long-time chronic conditions and have successfully changed their eating habits. They now enjoy energy and a greater sense of well-being.