

## Elimination Diet

Parents often wonder if there is a relationship between foods that a child eats and various symptoms. Hives, eczema, migraine headaches, diarrhea, congestion, asthma, and hyperactivity have all been blamed on foods. In reality, scientists have not been able to prove any relationship to diet for most of these symptoms. However, because your child is an individual, you and your physician may decide that it is worth looking into. Unfortunately, there are no currently available blood or skin tests that can reliably test for "food allergies". The best "test" for food allergies is an "elimination diet".

To perform the test, first have a good idea of the severity of symptoms while he is eating his normal diet. (For example, how often are the headaches occurring?) Then, the diet is tried for three weeks. If there is no improvement, then none of the foods that have been avoided are responsible for the symptoms. If there is improvement, then the child is fed one of the avoided foods, at first in small amounts, and gradually increasing the amount over three or four days. If the child's symptoms recur, it's possible that this food may be responsible. However to be sure that the improvement wasn't a coincidence, the food should again be eliminated to see if again the symptoms are improved. If there is an improvement similar to the first time, the food is then fed again. If the symptoms then return again this second time, you can be fairly certain that the food is related to the symptom.

Each suspected food is re-introduced into the diet in a similar manner, one at a time, to see if any foods cause the symptoms to reappear.

Often, the following diets are tried in the order listed. The most common foods allergens are eliminated first and the more restricted diets may be tried later if necessary.

### ***Diet #1***

Avoid all dairy products: milk, cheese ice cream, butter, yogurt, etc. Read food labels and avoid foods made with any dairy products.

### ***Diet #2***

Avoid:

1. Dairy products
2. Citrus fruits, juices, and drinks (oranges, lemons, etc.)
3. Tomatoes and tomato sauce
4. Strawberries and other berries
5. Peas and peanuts (including peanut butter)
6. Shellfish (shrimp, scallops, crab, etc.)
7. Chocolate
8. Eggs

***Diet #3***

Avoid all wheat products: this includes anything made with flour, including bread, pastries, pasta, noodles, crackers, etc.

***Diet #4***

Avoid all pork products, including ham, bologna, sausage, hot dogs, salami.

***Diet #5***

This is the strictest diet, the most difficult to follow, but often the best in terms of telling whether foods are causing problems. In this diet, your child may eat only the following:

1. Chicken or lamb
2. Bananas or apples
3. Plain rice or potatoes
4. Cabbage
5. Water

No other foods are allowed for three weeks. Again , if there is no improvement, the symptoms are not caused by foods. If the symptoms do improve, then start introducing foods, one every three days, to see if any make the symptoms in question reappear.

Most food allergies or reactions seem to be only temporary. It's worth trying the offending food again about once a year to see if your child has "outgrown" the problem.

