



INTOLERANCE OR ALLERGY?

We hear a lot about food allergies but in many cases it is intolerance that causes the problem, writes **Joan Breakey**.



Joan Breakey, APD.



Food intolerance is the name we give any adverse reaction to a food or food additive that is not due to an allergy. Food intolerance is the body's reaction to various chemicals in food such that an adverse reaction occurs. And reactions occur in a variety of parts of the body.

Food sensitive people are those whose various symptoms improve when they eat a diet that reduces a group of suspect food chemicals. These include food additives, colour, flavour, most preservatives, natural salicylates and amines, and natural and added monosodium glutamate, as well as smells. Some people are also sensitive to whole foods such as milk or wheat as well. An accredited practising dietitian (APD) can provide professional help to gradually work out the best diet for each individual.

Not all food sensitivity symptoms and problem behaviours are due to food intolerance, some have other medical causes. Unfortunately, there is no test that shows who is food sensitive or what food chemicals they cannot tolerate. But, with some 'diet detective work' it is possible to find out just what foods are a problem. While each person is different but with help from an APD, it is also possible to learn what may have been excluded unnecessarily, and

how to test foods carefully for tolerance so each person's diet can be as broad as possible.

Usually each person who suspects they have food intolerance has seen their symptoms occur or worsen

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after particular foods, even if it is not consistent. What is now known, from carefully collected information, is that it is wise to begin investigations by excluding all the known suspect chemicals. But just excluding additives or chocolate is unlikely to get the best results.

Before concentrating on a diet investigation, it is important to discuss symptoms with a GP. A GP will investigate if there are medical reasons for symptoms. When the medical tests have excluded medical problems, but distressing symptoms remain, it is time to talk about diet.

Food intolerance often runs in families. When first investigating diet, it is important to fill out a family sensitivity history which shows the food intolerant symptoms present in different family members. If the grandparent reacts to spice, the parent to chocolate, one child reacts to additives and another fruit juice then this can help with investigation into the baby's colic, for example.

In some families with food intolerance, there are less well-known symptoms that may be diet related. These include lethargy, or fatigue [or hyperactivity], mood changes, mouth ulcers, car sickness, fuzzy thinking, and even vivid dreams. **PS**

REAL LIFE...

The symptoms of food intolerance can change over a person's life, as one mother recounts...

"It is great to understand that my diarrhoea with milk in infancy; headaches in my teens, especially when I ate away from home; and my IBS are all connected, and connected to the other symptoms my family has. It now all makes sense!"

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APD) interpret the latest in nutrition science into practical, tailored advice. To find an APD visit: www.daa.asn.au