

Elimination Diet

An elimination diet (or exclusion diet) is a diagnostic procedure used to identify foods that an individual cannot consume without adverse effects.

Undertaking an Elimination Diet is a big commitment, and it can take several months to complete. It takes planning, and careful timing. It works best if you keep a diary of your symptoms before and during the diet.

The Elimination Phase

Before starting an elimination diet, check with your GP to ensure there are no underlying health problems or reasons that the diet may be unsuitable. Your Nutritional Therapist will be able to help you through the process, and may recommend a multi-vitamin supplement to day during the diet.

The Diet

During the elimination phase all the foods in the **avoid** column need to be eliminated.

As you adopt the new diet, you may start to feel worse before you notice any improvements. These are usually withdrawal symptoms caused by suddenly cutting out “problem” foods. Most people find the effects clear within the first week or two.

Once you have passed the withdrawal phase and your symptoms have cleared for 3-4 days you begin the reintroduction phase.

For some people the elimination diet causes a reduction in symptoms but not a complete clearance. If you still have some mild symptoms 3 weeks of the elimination diet then you should still proceed to the reintroduction phase to see if any of the foods you’ve been avoiding worsen your symptoms.

If your symptoms don’t improve at all on the elimination diet chance are food sensitivity isn’t responsible for your problem.

CATEGORY	FOODS TO INCLUDE	FOODS TO EXCLUDE
Dairy & eggs	Rice milk	Milk, cheese, cream, butter, yogurt, ice cream, soya milk, almond milk, oat milk, eggs
Starches	Brown rice, wild rice, red rice, millet, quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, tapioca, sweet potatoes	Wheat, corn/maize, barley, spelt, kamut, oats, rye, bulgar wheat, couscous, polenta Gluten containing products Bread, pasta and all products made from the above White potatoes
Yeast	None	All yeast containing foods: Bakery products, dried fruit, fermented foods, malt, meat extracts, vinegar, pickles, yeast extract, marmite, Bovril, stock cubes, cheese, hydrolysed vegetable protein, alcohol
Protein rich foods	Turkey, Chicken Fresh fish Hemp protein powder	Beef, lamb, pork Processed meat: Cold cuts, frankfurters, sausages, burgers, pate, smoked meat, canned meat Smoked fish Quorn
Legumes	None	All legumes including beans, peas and lentils. All soy products: Tofu, tempeh, miso, soya sauce, soybeans, soy milk, other soy products
Nuts and seeds	Pumpkin and sunflower seeds	All nuts including peanuts and peanut butter Sesame seeds
Fats	Cold pressed olive, flax, hemp, sunflower oils to use as dressings. Coconut oil for cooking	Margarine, butter, shortening, processed or hydrogenated oils mayonnaise, spreads
Fruits	Any fresh fruit except those listed opposite	Citrus fruits: Oranges, lemons, limes, tangerines, mandarins, clementines, grapefruit Commercial fruit juices Canned fruit

Vegetables	All fresh, raw, steamed, sautéed, juiced or roasted vegetables	Corn Mushrooms Nightshades (tomatoes, potatoes, aubergines, peppers)
Beverages	Filtered or mineral water, decaffeinated herbal teas	Soda, soft drinks, alcohol, coffee, tea, other caffeinated drinks, milky drinks
Spices and condiments	All herbs and spices Celtic or Himalayan salt	Commercial condiments e.g. ketchup, relish, chutney, soy sauce, BBQ sauce, etc

The Reintroduction Phase

This phase involves reintroducing foods one at a time to see if they cause any change in your symptoms. **Foods need to be tested one at a time** and in their most simple form. For example, to test wheat you need to pick something like plain pasta rather than bread, which has more multiple ingredients.

During testing, **it's important to keep a diary of everything you eat and any symptoms** you experience.

Testing Foods

- Eat a normal sized portion of the food at two meals during the day.
- Note down any changes that happen in your body during that day and the next.
- If you haven't had an adverse reaction, then repeat the process the following day.
- If you are still symptom clear, then repeat again for a third day.
- Once the test is complete avoid the food for 3-4 days to allow your body a rest and then, provided it hasn't caused you any problems, you can reintroduce this food back into your regular diet.
- Now you can move on to testing the next food.

If you experience a reaction to a food at any time, stop eating it immediately and note down what it was.

You should then avoid this food for at least 6 months.

After this time you can retest the food if you like.

If you get no further reaction it is likely that you'll be fine reintroducing the food into your diet on an occasional basis.

If a reaction occurs then you'll need to eliminate the food again for another 6 month or on an ongoing basis.

Elimination Foods

FOOD STUFF	SUGGESTED TEST FOODS	NOTES
Dairy & Eggs	Milk Cheese Eggs	Milk and cheese should be tested separately as some people are sensitive to one, but not the other Cow, sheep and goat dairy products should also be checked individually
Starches	Wheat – Plain pasta or shredded/puffed wheat with no added ingredients Rye – Plain rye crisp bread Maize – Sweetcorn or plain popcorn Barley – Pearl barley Oats – Porridge made with water or rice milk Plain boiled or baked potatoes	Wheat should be tested before the other cereals
Yeast	Marmite	Yeast should be tested before mushrooms
Protein rich foods	Plain grilled beef, chicken and pork Plain quorn chunks or mince	Quorn should be tested last as it contains other potential allergens such as barley and eggs and these need to be tested and proved safe first
Soya	Edamame soya beans Plain tofu Plain soya milk	
Nuts and seeds	Raw unsalted nuts	Nuts should be tested individually
Citrus Fruits	Oranges Lemons	Test oranges first, then lemons. If both of these are ok there's no need to test the other citrus fruits
Mushrooms	Plain grilled mushrooms	

Once you have completed your tests you should have a list of 'safe' and 'problem' foods. You can then create your own personalised low reactive diet.