Is Your Healthy Diet Making You Sick?
Food Allergies: Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment
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Contrary to popular belief food allergies are more than obvious immediate reactions that only afflict a small part of the population. According to allergy researcher and pioneer of clinical ecology, Theron Randolph, M.D., "Food allergy is the most commonly undiagnosed illness in medicine today." Some physicians claim that at least 70% of the United States population suffers from symptoms associated with allergies. In addition, symptoms can be experienced several days after ingesting a particular allergen.

Allergy: definition and reaction:

> *An allergy is an immediate or delayed reaction resulting in an inflammation or irritation of tissues caused by a foreign sensitizing substance (antigen), and one of the body's defense mechanisms.*
>
> *Food Allergy: an immune response to a normally innocuous substance in the diet – Dr. Pastore*

According to James Braly, M.D., author of Food Allergy and Nutrition Revolution, 95% of adverse reactions to food allergies involve immunoglobulins such as IgG as opposed to IgE. Unfortunately, the reactions that stimulate the release of immunoglobulin IgE and its subsequent mast cell secretions are immediate food/symptom reactions. Namely, you consume the allergen and experience an immediate easily identifiable reaction. Since many physicians are taught to recognize only allergies in which IgE immunoglobulins are released, many people with delayed-onset food allergies such as those in which the immunoglobulins IgG are involved remain undiagnosed.

Four types of tissue related allergy responses have been identified, and upon understanding them one can realize the importance of identifying a hidden food allergy.

Allergic Hypersensitivity Reactions (1)

Type I: Reactions occurring in less then 2 hours, characterized by IgE binding with a specific antigen resulting in leukocyte release of tissue irritant chemicals including leukotrienes, lysosomal enzymes, histamines, kinin and bradykinin-like substances and dehydroascorbic acid, resulting in inflammation and irritation.

Type II: Cytotoxic reactions involving IgM and IgG immunoglobulins resulting in cell destruction.

Type III: Delayed reactions involving immune complex mediated reactions that can result in tissue injury if deposited in tissues. This type of hypersensitivity has been shown to involve IgG immunoglobulins.

Type IV: Delayed reaction not involving immunoglobulins. Primarily involves T-lymphocytes, resulting in inflammation after 36 to 72 hours after contact.

After such an explanation one might wonder why and how anyone would or could continue to consume foods to which they are allergic. There are two reasons. First, with such a delay in some reactions, one

may not even realize that their bodily complaints are associated with a particular food allergy. Secondly, some foods that we are allergic to may actually make us feel better.

Searching for Hidden Allergies

IgG EIA RAST foods blood test is an easy method for detecting delayed food allergy reactions. The IgG RAST blood test identifies not just immediate reactions like classic peanut or shellfish allergies, which lead to anaphylactoid or anaphylaxis reactions. This highly sensitive test identifies delayed food allergy reactions which may be slow to manifest via symptoms. Hidden and delayed food allergy reactions can occur days after the offending food was consumed, making it all but impossible to try to figure out what one is allergic or sensitive too without this test. I believe this is one of the most important tests one can undertake. However, not all IgG RAST tests are created equal. Many traditional laboratories may offer a version of the IgG RAST blood test; however they may be severely inaccurate. Discuss this concept with a doctor knowledgeable in integrative medicine.

The Second Brain

The gut is truly the second brain. Intestinal development and brain development occur simultaneously in the fetus. The majority of serotonin is manufactured in the gastrointestinal tract. Food allergies can affect mood, thoughts and behavior. As you will see, eating something you are allergic to, may be akin to an addiction.

The G.A.L.T

Seventy percent of the human immune system resides in the gut. The gut associated lymphoid tissue is the major immune power of the human body. Can you imagine how food allergies can disrupt optimal health? Immune reactions to food can result in suppression of more than half the human immune system, or activate it against ourselves. This is the basis of clinical research in "molecular mimicry." Though viruses and bacteria my be triggers, certain food peptides (amino acid components) may trigger self attack. The best paper on this subject is written by Loren Cordain, Ph.D. and is called "Cereal Grains, Humanities Double Edge Sword."

Adaptation, Addiction and Maladaptation:

In the body's never-ending quest to obtain psychological and biochemical balance in the face of any external and internal environment, to cope with the resulting discomfort due to the presence of an allergen (food mediated) the body responds with a surge of chemicals, including a group called opioids to obtain a tranquil endogenous state so that it can attempt to deal with the circulating immune complexes. During this short duration of opioid activity, the individual actually feels a "high" or relief of symptoms. So, in essence, the individual may actually feel better by ingesting the allergen. Now the individual may crave the food that is causing the allergic reaction. That is why a persons most favorite food is usually the antagonist, creating such a negative immune response.

Maintaining this sense of a symptom free state is called adaptation, a short-lived step in the allergy cycle. When an individual constantly ingests the allergen, the body begins to accept that it will be inundated with this foreign macromolecule and continue to disperse the chemicals necessary to achieve the aforementioned euphoric state creating an addiction. However, this is finite. That is why many cases of prolonged allergen responses are associated with adrenal and other glandular system exhaustion.

One can easily draw an analogy between cigarette smoking and allergy adaptation. The first cigarette causes a feeling of nausea and dizziness, not to mention coughing. Then when one continues to smoke, the body responds by releasing various chemicals to try to create a state of tranquility while it tries to tolerate the toxic nature of the habit. All the while the individual is unaware of the damage occurring internally.

The habitual ingestion of the allergen can lead to maladaptation, which according to Integrative Medical Physician Ralph Golan, M.D., is the inability of the body's biochemical processes to correct achieve balance. This is what leads to chronic illness and systemic symptoms.

Characteristics: (2)

Having a basic understanding of the biochemical cause and effect of the allergic response, one need look no further then a few well-researched books on the topic to obtain a list of signs and symptoms of voluminous differentiation. In the face of such diversity, who's right? Well, understanding the nature of irritation and inflammation that can be attributed to an allergen, everyone is right. The following is just a small look into conditions associated with and signs attributed to allergies.

Conditions: Angina, Arthritis, Asthma, Colitis, Crohn's disease, Eczema, Fibrositis, Malabsorption.

Signs: dark circles and puffiness under eyes, feeling bloated after meals, nausea, canker sores, constipation and diarrhea, mucus in stools and excess in sinuses, rashes, rapid heart beat, water retention, mental or physical fatigue upon rising in the morning or after meals and changes in emotional and metal behavior. See appendix 1 for a longer list of common symptoms of food allergies.

Associated conditions:

When looking at any health situation from a holistic perspective, an individual must realize other causative factors that can be involved in developing food allergies. The following can contribute to food allergies. Poor digestion, nutrient deficiencies, genetic relationship such as in celiac sprue and lactose intolerance, chemical sensitivities, candidiasis and intestinal parasites, a monotonous diet, high anti-nutrient intake such as refined foods, alcohol and trans-fatty acids, a high stress lifestyle, and over-use of various medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and antibiotics.

Diary, Identification, Elimination, Immunotherapy, Challenge, Rotation:

One must become a food sleuth in order to successfully solve the allergy puzzle. The best method of attack is to start a food diary listing everything that is eaten including the herbs and seasonings used in cooking, nutritional supplements, and any symptoms experienced. In addition, analyze the food diary to find the most frequently eaten foods.

See your doctor to have an IgG EIA RAST food blood test. This will identify hidden allergens.

Eliminate the foods as directed by your physician or clinical nutritionist – make sure you have a long list of hidden sources. Eliminating wheat is not as simple as just stopping bread. There are numerous hidden sources of wheat that a clinical nutritionist can help you identify.

At this time Immunotherapy should be initiated. Immunotherapy is the process of using the allergen at a diluted dose to desensitize the patient to the food allergy, making it easier for the patient to add the food into his/her diet after the elimination period. In this non-invasive method of allergy desensitization, drops of the diluted allergen are placed under the tongue three times daily to build up a tolerance and relax the immune system response. Drop potency is adjusted after the first three months. Duration of therapy can last two years, but it can result in permanent elimination of a food allergen!

During the first week, if an allergen was eliminated, withdrawal symptoms of short duration might be experienced. Some patients increase an exacerbation of the original complaint. This is very common because you were addicted to the food and you are "breaking" that addiction. You have to stick this out. The good news is that Immunotherapy will greatly reduce the incidence of withdrawal symptoms. So carefully follow the directions provided by your doctor and take your drops daily.

Immunotherapy and food allergy elimination occur at the same time. Allergenic foods should be avoided for a period of six months. After the elimination period, try adding back each food one at a time leaving seventy-two hours between foods, recording any experiences in the diary. After this challenge period, foods that exhibit no negative repercussions back to the diet on a four-day rotation plan. The purpose of the rotation diet is to avoid any new allergies from forming, and allow full effect of the Immunotherapy program. Use all natural "whole foods" when planning your meals and substituting for allergens.

At this point the main objective is to enhance and improve digestion. When digestion is made more complete and quickened, the body reactivates its natural healing abilities and slowly decreases environmental and food allergies. Four basic steps will assist in improving digestion. First, work with an integrative medical team that will help you identify your dietary allergies by retesting your IgG Rast foods blood test. Second, remain on a rotation diet until all allergies and food sensitivities are identified and eliminated and treated via Immunotherapy. Third, the medical and nutritional staff can education the patient on the science of various herbs, foods and probiotics that enhance hydrochloric acid and pancreatic enzyme output, and assist in rebuilding healthy intestinal flora, such as ginger, aloe vera, bromelain, lemon juice, fructooligosaccharides, lactobacillus species, and L-glutamine. Forth, practice a form of stress reduction such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing and visualization.

In summary, utilizing an integrative medical approach to identifying, treating and eliminating dietary allergies can put an individual on the right path to optimum wellness. By examining associated conditions, analyzing the present diet, keeping a food diary, eliminating possible allergens, starting a rotation diet, enhancing digestion and practicing stress reduction techniques, one can solve a problem that affects over 70% of the population. So, remember, what is a normal healthy wholesome food for one individual, can cause allergies in another individual. One person's food can truly be another person's poison. The next time you plan a meal or reach for a snack, ask yourself, "Is my diet making me sick?"

References:

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Appendix 1

Common Symptoms Associated With Food Allergies	
Head	• Dark circles under eyes • Swelling and wrinkles under eyes • Cluster headaches and other "vascular" headaches, migraine headaches • Faintness • Dizziness • Feelings of fullness in the head • Excessive drowsiness or sleepiness soon after eating • Insomnia • Frequent awakening during the night • Early AM awakening (usually between 2 and 4 AM) with inability to return to sleep
Eyes, ears, nose and throat	• Runny nose • Stuffy nose • Excessive mucus formation • Postnasal drip • Watery eyes • Blurring of vision • Tinnitus (buzzing, roaring, popping, ringing in the ears) • Earache • Fullness in the ears • Fluid in the middle ear • Hearing loss • Recurrent ear infections • Itching ear • Ear drainage • Sore throats • Hoarseness • Chronic cough • Gagging • Canker sores

	• Itching of the roof of the mouth • Recurrent sinusitis • Persistent nose picking
Heart and lungs	• Palpitations • Arrhythmias • Increased heart rate • Rapid heart rate (tachycardia) • Asthma • Congestion in the chest • Exercise induced anaphylaxis and asthma
Gastrointestinal	• Mucus in stools • Undigested food in stools • Nausea • Vomiting • Diarrhea • Constipation • Bloating after meals • Belching • Colitis • Flatulence (passing gas) • Feeling of fullness in stomach long after finishing a meal • Abdominal pains or cramps • Irritable bowel syndrome • Colic in infants • Failure to thrive in infants • Extreme thirst • Inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis) • Anal itching • Coated tongue (especially in the morning after waking) • Apparent symptoms of gallblatter disease (which may turn out to be of allergenic nature instead)
Skin	• Hives • Itching • Rashes • Eczema • Dermatitis herpetiformas • Pallor • Dry skin • Dandruff

	• Brittle nails and hair
Other Symptoms	• "Growing pains" in children • Symptoms of PMS • Chronic fatigue • Weakness • Muscle aches and pains • Arthritis • Swelling of the hands, feet or ankles • Urinary tract symptoms (frequency, urgency) • Vaginal itching • Vaginal discharge • Abnormal cravings and binge eating • Epilepsy in children with migraines • Obesity • Rapid weight fluctuation from day to day (2 -10 pounds or more)
Psychological Symptoms	• Anxiety • Panic attacks • Depression • Crying jags • Aggressive behavior • Irritability • Mental dullness • Mental lethargy • Confusion • Excessive daydreaming • Hyperactivity in children or adults • Restlessness • Learning disabilities • Poor work habits • Slurred speech • Stuttering • Inability to concentrate • Indifference • Perhaps certain types of autism/schizophrenia • Perhaps bulimia/anorexia nervosa