



30-Day Comprehensive
Elimination Diet Guide



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What is an Elimination Diet?

The Comprehensive Elimination Diet is a dietary program designed to clear the body of foods and chemicals you may be allergic or sensitive to. You'll essentially be eating an organic, whole foods diet with plenty of high quality proteins and fats, and no refined foods or artificial sugars. In short, it is an *anti-inflammatory*, chemical-free diet that is more in alignment with the diet our ancestors followed.

The main rationale behind the elimination diet is that these modifications allow your body's detoxification machinery, which may be overburdened or compromised, to recover and begin to function efficiently again. The dietary changes help the body eliminate or "clear" various toxins that may have accumulated due to environmental exposure, foods, beverages, drugs, alcohol, or cigarette smoking. It also helps reduce inflammation throughout your body.

This called a Comprehensive Elimination Diet because you remove certain foods, and food categories, from your diet. During a period of 30 days you eliminate foods from your diet which are the most likely culprits. If your symptoms improve during the 30-day period, you'll carefully add foods back into your diet one at a time to see which foods may be triggering symptoms. If you find no improvement within four weeks either you do not have any food allergies, or you may have food allergies but there is yet another factor complicating the picture. There are no magical answers here; this is a journey of self-exploration and discovery.

Changing food habits can be a complex, difficult and sometimes confusing process. It doesn't have to be. I have simplified the process with diet menus, recipes, snack suggestions and other information to make it a do-able process for you. I created this guide to give you a quick overview of the dietary plan.

Make sure you only eat the foods listed under "Foods to Include" and avoid those foods shown under "Foods to Exclude" in the Comprehensive Elimination Diet Food List (page 7). If you have a question about a particular food, check to see if it is on the food list.

You should, of course, avoid any listed foods to which you know you are intolerant or allergic. You also may change some of these guidelines based upon your personal health condition and history.

Read through the information in this guide carefully. If you have any questions, please post your questions in the BB50 Support Community or bring them to our next live coaching session.

You can do this!



Tips for Success

- The first 2-3 days are the hardest. It's important that you plan your meals out for the week ahead of time, so you know which ingredients you need to buy at the grocery store. Choose one day each week to plan out your meals, go shopping and prep your food.
- Eat simply. Cook simply. Make enough for leftovers. Make a pot of chicken-vegetable soup, a large salad and cook chicken ahead of time. Have prepared food on hand so you can grab something quickly.
- You may use leftovers for the next days' meal or part of a meal, e.g., leftover broiled salmon and broccoli from dinner as part of a large salad for lunch the next day.
- Eat regular meals every 4 -5 hours that are balanced for your Metabolic Nutritional Type. (Eating every 4-5 hours keeps your blood sugar levels normal. It's very important to keep your blood sugar and insulin levels stable.)
- Pack food when you leave the house. This makes it easier to eat the foods you're supposed to eat and not be tempted to stray off the plan.
- Avoid any foods that you know or believe you may be sensitive to, even if they are on the "Foods to Include" list.
- Try to eat at least one raw vegetable each day.
- Try to eat at least 3 servings of fresh vegetables each day. Choose at least one serving of dark green or orange vegetables (carrot, broccoli, winter squash). Vary your selections.
- Buy organic produce whenever possible to eliminate pesticide and chemical residue consumption. Select fresh foods whenever you can. Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Eat a wide variety of foods and do not try to restrict your calorie intake.
- If you choose not to eat meat, you *can* eliminate the meats and fish and consume more beans and gluten free grains like wild rice, quinoa, amaranth, teff, millet, and buckwheat. (But I highly recommend taking these foods out for 30 days so you can test your reactions to them.)
- If you are consuming coffee or other caffeine containing beverages on a regular basis, it is always wise to slowly reduce your caffeine intake rather than abruptly stop it; this will prevent caffeine-withdrawal headaches. See the "4-Step Plan to Kick Caffeine" on page 28 of the Clean Eating Success Guide for a plan to slowly reduce caffeine.
- Read oil labels; use only those that are obtained by a "cold pressed" method.
- Buy free-range/pastured, organically raised chicken, turkey, or lamb.
- Buy cold-water fish (e.g., salmon, mackerel, and halibut). These are an excellent source of protein and the omega-3 essential fatty acids, which are important nutrients in this diet.
- Remember to drink at least 50% of your body weight in ounces of plain, filtered water each day.
- Your largest meals should be breakfast and lunch, with a smaller meal at dinner.
- I recommend that you stop all strenuous or prolonged exercise the entire elimination diet to allow the body to heal more effectively without the additional burden imposed by exercise.
- Adequate rest and stress reduction are important to the success of your program. (We'll talk more about creating a plan of action for these in upcoming modules.)
- If you're trying to lose weight, you'll want to minimize the amount of grains, starches and high-sugar fruit that you eat. You'll focus more on eating healthy proteins, fats and low-glycemic fruits and vegetables.
- I suggest stopping all non-prescribed supplements and adding them back in, one at a time, after 30 days to test your reaction to them.



Additional Considerations

POSSIBLE REACTIONS: In my experience, I have found this process to be generally well tolerated and extremely beneficial. There is no “typical” or “normal” response. A person’s initial response to any new diet is highly variable, and this diet is no exception. This can be attributed to physiological, mental, and biochemical differences among individuals; the degree of exposure to, and type of “toxin;” and other lifestyle factors. Most people feel better and better each day during the elimination diet. Most often, individuals on the elimination diet report increased energy and mental alertness, decreased muscle or joint pain, and a general sense of improved well-being.

However, some people report some initial reactions to the diet, especially in the first week, as their bodies adjust to a different dietary program. Some reactions you may experience in the first week or so can include weight gain, fluid retention, fatigue, brain fog, mood problems, changes in sleep patterns, lightheadedness, headaches, joint or muscle stiffness, skin breakouts (acne, eczema), flushing, sinus and nasal congestion, itching, nausea, dizziness, bowel changes (diarrhea and/or constipation), bloating, indigestion, feeling sleepy 30 minutes after eating, food cravings and rapid heartbeat. Such symptoms rarely last for more than a few days. This could be a result of your body detoxing.

If you are used to drinking caffeine, you may get withdrawal symptoms the first few days which may include: headaches, fatigue irritability, malaise, or increased hunger. If you find your energy lagging, you may need to eat more frequently to keep your blood sugar levels (thinking, energy) level. And remember to drink plenty of water.

TESTING INDIVIDUAL FOODS: Once you have completed your 30 days on the elimination diet, you’ll begin to reintroduce foods (i.e. grains, dairy, eggs, nuts, beans and legumes etc.) back into your diet to “test” your reaction, if you choose. If any of these foods cause a reaction, you’ll eliminate them for at least 6 months before reintroducing them again. (If you have digestive issues, it’s not recommended that you reintroduce beans and legumes).

You’ll want to keep a food journal of all the foods you’ve eaten in a given day and you’ll make note of any negative body signals you experience. Make sure to add foods *one* at a time and wait 72 hours between foods. Eat the test food at least twice a day and in a fairly large amount. Eat that food in its purest form first thing in the morning on an empty stomach. For example, test milk or cheese or wheat, but not macaroni and cheese that contains milk, cheese and wheat! (It is very IMPORTANT that you do not mix foods and that you wait 72 hours in between foods so you’ll have a clear indication which food you’re reacting to.)

Often an offending food will provoke symptoms quickly—within in 10 minutes to 12 hours. If you don’t immediately react, notice how you feel the following day. Many food sensitivity responses can take up to 48 hours to manifest. Signs to look for include: headache, itching, bloating, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, diarrhea, indigestion, anal itching, sleepy 30 minutes after a meal, flushing, rapid heartbeat. If you are unsure, take the food back out of your diet for at least one week and try it again.



BE CAUTIOUS OF GRAINS AND LEGUMES: Regarding high carb foods such as grains and legumes, if you have a goal of weight loss or if you suffer with digestive concerns such as heartburn, IBS, colitis, Crohn's, constipation, diarrhea, or frequent bloating, it is recommended that you *don't* reintroduce grains and legumes to your diet due to their inflammatory effects on the digestive tract.

If you choose to include these foods in your diet, you can determine your carb tolerance by adding in a small amount at a time (start with a half cup or less) at meals and taking note of how you feel afterward, similar to the food allergy/sensitivity reintroduction. If you feel fatigued/lethargic or bloated after meals, it's an indication you've had too many carbs. Whatever amount causes fatigue (if any) is the amount you should stay under. For example, if you feel energized eating a meal with 1/2 cup legumes but feel fatigued after eating 1 cup of legumes, stick to 1/2 cup. Your meals should leave you feeling energized and not overly full. You can do this with starchy vegetables too.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GLUTEN AND NIGHTSHADES: You'll want to remove gluten and nightshades from your diet for 60 days because it can take up to that amount of time for these foods to clear your system.

READ FOOD LABELS CAREFULLY: Make sure you read all labels carefully to find and avoid hidden allergens.

Things to watch for:

- Corn starch in baking powder and any processed foods
- Vinegar in ketchup, mayonnaise and mustard is usually from wheat or corn
- Many canned tunas contain textured vegetable protein which is from soy; look for low-salt versions which tend to be pure tuna, with no fillers

THE RESULTS: By avoiding symptom provoking foods and taking supportive supplements to restore gut integrity, most food allergies/sensitivities will resolve within 4-6 months. This means that in most cases you will then be able to eat foods again that formerly bothered you. In some cases, you will find that the allergy doesn't go away. In this case either you must wait longer, or it may be a "fixed" allergy that will remain lifelong.

AFTER THE TESTING: If after you do the elimination diet you still don't feel like you've been able to identify all trouble foods, and you want to go deeper with Food Sensitivity Testing, you can learn more about these functional lab tests during your bonus coaching call or by setting up a complimentary consultation with me. I use a food sensitivity test called the Mediator Release Test that evaluates over 140 foods and 20 chemical additives. Contact me at melissa@betterbeyond50.com to learn more.

BE PATIENT: Anytime you change your diet significantly, you may experience such symptoms as fatigue, headache, or muscle aches for a few days. Your body needs time as it is "withdrawing" from the foods you eat on a daily basis. Your body may crave some foods it is used to consuming. Be Patient! Those symptoms generally don't last long, and most people feel much better over the next couple of weeks.



Comprehensive Elimination Diet Food List

Food Groups	Foods to Include	Foods to Exclude
Sweeteners	Use Sparingly: stevia, Lakanto, blackstrap molasses, Lo Han, Xylitol, Erythritol	Refined sugar, white/brown sugars, honey, maple syrup, high fructose corn syrup, evaporated cane juice, agave, brown rice syrup, artificial sweeteners (Aspartame, saccharin, Splenda)
Fruit <i>*Organic (see Dirty Dozen)</i>	Whole fruits, preferably low-sugar fruits: Green apples, berries, avocados	Fruit juice, tomatoes and citrus fruits (grapefruit, orange, lemon, lime). Note: tomatoes (in the nightshade family) (and citrus fruits are common allergens so they should be eliminated for 30 days.
Meat & Fish <i>*Grass-fed, anti-biotic, hormone free is best</i>	Chicken, turkey, beef, wild game, lamb, duck, fresh water-packed tuna, white fish (cod, haddock)	Breaded meat, pork, cold cuts, canned meats, hot dogs, shellfish. Note: shellfish are common food allergens so they should be eliminated for 30 days.
Eggs	None	Eggs and Egg substitutes.
Dairy	None Dairy substitutes: coconut or rice milk	All dairy: Milk, cheese, cottage, cheese, yogurt, cream, ice cream, butter, non-dairy creamers.
Vegetables <i>*Organic (see Dirty Dozen)</i>	All raw, steamed, sautéed, juiced or roasted vegetables	Creamed vegetables and nightshades (potatoes, eggplant and peppers). Note: Nightshades are common allergens, so they should be eliminated for 30 days.
Legumes	None	Beans, peas, lentils and all soy products (soy milk, soy cheese, tofo, soy sauce).
Grains & Starches	None	Wheat, corn, barley, spelt, rye, rice (all types), millet, quinoa, amaranth, teff, buckwheat, oats, potatoes, beans and legumes. Note: Grains, especially gluten, are common food allergens, so they should be eliminated for 30 days.
Fats & Oils <i>*Cold-pressed, organic</i>	Olive, ghee, coconut	Butter, margarine, shortening, processed oils, salad dressings, mayonnaise, and spreads, flax, safflower, sesame, almond, sunflower, walnut, canola, pumpkin
Nuts & Seeds <i>*Raw, unsalted</i>	Coconut, pine nuts, flax seeds, chia seeds	All other nuts: Peanuts and peanut butter, walnuts, sesame, pumpkin, and sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, pecans, almonds, cashews, nut butters. Note: Nuts and seeds are common food allergens, so they should be eliminated for 30 days
Condiments	Raw apple cider vinegar, all spices, including salt, pepper, basil, carob, cinnamon, cumin, dill, garlic, ginger, mustard, oregano, parsley, rosemary, tarragon, thyme, turmeric	Chocolate, ketchup, relish, chutney, soy sauce, barbecue sauce, teriyaki, salad dressings, and other condiments and vinegars
Yeast	None	Baker's yeast, brewer's yeast, fermented products (i.e. canned pickles, olives and condiments.) Note: Yeast is a common food allergen, so it should be eliminated for 30 days.
Beverages	Filtered water, decaffeinated herbal teas, seltzer or mineral water	Alcohol, caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea), soda, fruit juice



Additional Anti-Inflammatory Eating Guidelines

Protein

Protein is the framework of a brain healthy diet, because protein breaks down into the amino acids that are the precursors to your feel-good neurotransmitters, serotonin and dopamine. High quality protein sources include grass fed beef, bison, and lamb; free range poultry; wild fish; cage free eggs; and organic, farm raised pork. It is very important that you eat adequate protein—a serving is about four to six ounces or the size of your palm (your servings at each meal depend on your Metabolic Nutritional Type). The variety of protein sources and quality are of utmost importance. Protein must be organic, hormone-free, free-range, grass-fed, and “wild” in the case of fish. Conventional, factory farmed meat is full of toxins, hormones, and antibiotics that rob us of good health. Use only fresh meats; avoid those that are processed and packaged.

Grass fed: Means the animal is free to roam and eat primarily grass/fresh greens, including all pasture plants and insects, without limitation. The American Grass-fed Association defines grass-fed products from ruminants, including cattle, bison, goats and sheep, as those food products from animals that have eaten nothing but their mother’s milk and fresh grass or grass-type hay from their birth till harvest. It has a better ratio of omega 3: 6 fatty acids compared to grain fed beef.

Organic: Organic means that food producers must adhere to strict standards. It forbids use of antibiotics, hormones, pesticides, irradiation or bioengineering. Farms must adhere to certain soil and water conservation methods and to rules about the humane treatment of animals. An organic label does not guarantee that animals spent most of their time on pasture, however.

See “How to Read Food Labels” in your Clean Eating Success Guide, which can be found in module 2, to learn more about what food labels mean.

Vegetables

Nutrient-rich vegetables provide an abundance of the vitamins and minerals that sustain your body and should make up the base of your diet. Again, quality and variety are key. Your body is most nourished with high-quality, nutrient dense organic produce. Many therapeutic nutrients such as antioxidants and flavonoids are associated with the properties that give vegetables their color, so make sure you are eating a good range.

Eating vegetables raw or lightly cooked helps maintain vitamin and mineral content and makes them easier to digest. Choose mostly lower carb green vegetables.

Low carb green vegetables: Eat an abundance of these. They are high in minerals and low in calories. Examples include leafy greens such as kale, chard, spinach, collards, beet greens, mustard greens, bok choy, beet greens, spinach, and salad greens; cruciferous, celery, radish, cucumber, etc. Dark-green steamed vegetables are superior to salad greens.



Higher carb root/starchy vegetables: After the 30-day period, you can test your reaction to these foods. If you don't have a negative reaction, you can eat these in *small* portions (that are appropriate for your unique Metabolic Nutritional Type) and always balance with low carb or green vegetables and protein. Some examples include carrots, beets, winter squash, sweet potatoes, turnips, parsnips, rutabagas.

Onions and garlic: Eat these as desired. Alliums provide a good source of sulfur-containing amino acids that enhance liver detox function.

Whole, fresh, seasonal fruits are allowed in moderation. Choose lower sugar fruits such as berries, apples, stone fruits, and pears. After the 30-day period, you can test your reaction to other fruits. If you don't have a negative reaction, you can add higher sugar fruits sparingly: tropical fruits, melons, grapes. Avoid dried fruits due to their high sugar content. Limit fruit intake to one piece daily.

Most of us are concerned with saving money and buying organic may sometimes be pricey. Shop at your local farmers' markets where you'll find seasonal and local produce. Buying blueberries imported from Chile in the wintertime will cost you because the shipping prices drive up the overall cost of food. Save money by buying seasonal produce from local farms. If you cannot afford to purchase all organic produce, here is a list of fruits and vegetables to prioritize buying organic due to their higher levels of pesticides. Produce with rinds or peels may be purchased conventionally.

Worst offenders (the "Dirty Dozen," buy these organic): apples, celery, berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries), peaches spinach, grapes, bell peppers, leafy greens, mixed salad greens

Cleanest choices (lowest levels of pesticide): onions, avocado, pineapple, asparagus, sweet peas, mango, eggplant, melon, kiwi, cabbage, sweet potato, citrus, mushrooms

Fats/Oils

Choose coconut oil, ghee, olive oil, sesame oil, nut oils, flaxseed, avocado, nuts and seeds. Eat fat with *every* meal, either as a dressing or fat in which you've cooked your food. (Remember to balance your fat ratios in the right proportions for your Metabolic Nutritional Type.)



Safe to heat: saturated fats are best for high temp cooking/sautéing, as they are the most stable. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature and include coconut oil and ghee.

Moderate temps: monounsaturated fats will break down under high heat, so they're best used for medium temp cooking. These include olive oil, sesame oil and avocado oil. Use seed oils sparingly because they are high in the inflammatory omega 6 fatty acids.

Eat cold: polyunsaturated fats should ever be heated. Flaxseed oil, nut oils, and nuts/seeds (choose raw and unpasteurized) are examples.

Avoid the following fats/oils entirely: hydrogenated/partially hydrogenated, margarine, canola oil, grapeseed oil, vegetable oil, corn oil, soy oil, cottonseed oil, peanut oil, rice bran oil

Nuts/Seeds

Nuts and seeds can be a great go-to snack, but it's easy to overdo them, so be aware not to exceed the serving sizes recommended for your Metabolic Nutritional Type, especially if your goal is weight loss. After you've completed the 30-day elimination, choose a variety from the following list: almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts. Always buy raw and unpasteurized nuts if you can find them. Soaking nuts overnight in filtered water and sea salt makes them easier to digest.

Beverages

Water is the *best* beverage to drink. Our bodies are about 70 percent water, and it is considered a nutrient, optimizing digestive function and elimination of toxins from your body. It's best to avoid too much caffeine and alcoholic beverages, especially beer, which contains gluten. If you are a daily caffeine consumer, you may not want to quit cold turkey. Start by making improvements in your diet and exercise patterns, and the need for the extra boost caffeine provides will fade over time. You'll also want to titrate down slowly to avoid the nasty headaches that may occur with caffeine withdrawal. (See the "4-Step Plan to Kick Caffeine (without Withdrawal Symptoms)" in your Clean Eating Success Plan.) Coffee is very acidic to the body, which accelerates the aging process, contributes to unstable blood sugar, and stresses the adrenal glands. Capomo is a good coffee substitute. It's made from the Maya nut and brewed just like coffee. Green tea is health promoting. Drink half your body weight in ounces of water every day. Also enjoy a variety of herbal, white, and red (rooibos) teas. Avoid coffee (including de-caffeinated), which is very acidic. If you want coffee, try Capomo instead. After the 30-day elimination, if you choose to drink alcohol, go for vodka or high quality tequila, the lowest in sugar.

Super Brain Foods

Foods high in the omega 3 fatty acids are nourishing for the brain and include grass fed beef, fatty fish (like salmon), eggs, walnuts, leafy greens, and cod liver oil. Blueberries are antioxidant rich, fight free radical damage and may improve cognition. Super foods and spices that chelate heavy metals from the body include cilantro and chlorella. Spirulina-chlorella superfoods blends pack a double benefit of cleansing the liver and assisting in the removal of toxins and metals. Certain spices like turmeric, ginger and cayenne are cleansing and thermogenic.



Foods/Beverages to Avoid

Refined white sugar, gluten-containing foods, grains, dairy, legumes, soy milk and soy foods, processed and refined carbohydrates (cookies, candies, muffins, pastries—especially the gluten free varieties, which are high in sugars and are processed foods), artificial sweeteners (saccharin, aspartame, NutraSweet®, Equal®) MSG, soft drinks, fruit juices, beer.

Sugar

While glucose is necessary fuel for the brain, consuming excess sugar disrupts blood glucose levels, causing energy spikes and dips, imbalanced hormone levels, and increases hunger and cravings. Sugar offers *no* nutritive value and disrupts the body's delicate mineral balance, taxing the adrenal glands. Maintaining stable blood sugar is key to fat loss, satiety, stable energy levels and keeping hormone and stress levels in check. You can think of your blood sugar control like a car with gas in the fuel tank. If your car runs out of fuel, it will stall and you will be stranded. Similarly, food is your fuel. Eating the proper foods fuels you by providing adequate blood sugar. A car that runs out of gas will just stop, but if your body runs on low blood sugar it will literally break down muscle, organ, and bone tissue to keep itself going. This creates a catabolic, or breakdown, condition. The moment your blood sugar drops below a certain point you lose the fuel that supplies your brain and other organs. At this moment, physiologically, biochemically, and metabolically, you can become immune compromised.

Maintaining blood sugar is based on a balance of two hormones: insulin and glucagon. Both are produced in your pancreas in response to the types of foods you eat. Insulin is produced in response to eating carbohydrates. Glucagon is produced in response to eating protein. If you eat too much food or too many carbohydrates at one time, insulin will quickly lower your blood sugar, leading to an energy crash, resulting in sugar cravings. If you skip meals, you will also experience low blood sugar.

Classic symptoms of low blood sugar are headaches, brain fog, sweet cravings (or carbohydrate cravings), nervousness, inability to think clearly, anxiety and even depression in severe situations. Some people do not experience any symptoms when they are low in blood sugar, so the problem can go unnoticed. Avoid all white sugar, which is chemically processed and refined and sneaks into almost all packaged foods. Sugar hides under the following names: evaporated cane juice, turbinado, Sucanat®, brown rice syrup, and barley malt. Raw honey, grade B maple syrup, and molasses are also off your list. You can eat stevia, a small amount of coconut sugar, and xylitol or erythritol if your gut tolerates them.



Gluten

Gluten is the protein found in wheat, rye, spelt, kamut, and barley. Gluten is getting a lot of attention because of the rising incidence of gluten intolerance, an inflammatory reaction originating in the digestive tract that has the potential to cause myriad health problems. The real culprit is a molecule called gliadin, which is found in gluten-containing grains and causes symptoms in gluten sensitive people. In people who are genetically sensitive to gliadin, the molecule combines with an enzyme called transglutaminase, which triggers an inflammatory, autoimmune reaction in the small intestine. These people may also need to avoid all grains due to the lectins present in grains that also trigger systemic inflammation.

Gluten sensitivity can result in malabsorption in the digestive tract by destroying the villi on the lining of the small intestine, inhibiting one's ability to adequately absorb nutrients. This leads to chronic nutritional deficiencies and uncomfortable intestinal symptoms such as bloating, gas, diarrhea, constipation, fatigue, depression, mood issues, and anxiety. There also may be neurological symptoms such as shooting pain or numbness or tingling of the arms and legs, and malabsorption of calcium that can cause muscle cramping and tension, skin rashes, and eventually osteoporosis. Migraine headaches are another potential symptom.

People have differing degrees of gluten sensitivity. If it is mild, you may only become a little puffy or bloated after eating foods containing gluten, whereas those with extreme gluten sensitivity could wind up with significant digestive problems from eating only a small amount of gluten-containing foods. The larger issue is that no matter where you fall on the spectrum, every time you consume gluten, your digestive tract becomes inflamed, inhibiting nutrient absorption and driving your stress hormones out of balance. The answer is a gluten free (and possibly grain free) diet.

Although not everyone is gluten intolerant, everyone benefits from a gluten free diet, because it reduces inflammation in the digestive tract and forces us to eat less of the processed, refined foods that contain gluten, and more unprocessed foods such as organic vegetables, quality proteins, fats, and healthy carbohydrates.

AM I GLUTEN INTOLERANT?

Gluten intolerance is most common among people of Irish, English, Scottish, Scandinavian, and Eastern European descent. Oftentimes it is assumed that gluten intolerance is a food allergy, but it is not. It is actually an autoimmune process that affects an alarming percentage of the population. The most significant symptoms are weight gain, fatigue and depression.



THE GLUTEN-FREE DIET

Eating gluten-free means avoiding all foods containing gluten, including wheat, white flour, rye, spelt, bulgar, semolina, couscous, triticale, and durum flour. Gluten can be hidden, so read labels carefully. Be wary of modified food starch, dextrin, flavorings and extracts, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, imitation seafood, and creamed or thickened products such as soups, stews, and sauces.

Gluten-free grains include rice, quinoa, millet, amaranth, and 100 percent buckwheat. For some people, eliminating gluten or consuming only gluten-free food is enough to relieve symptoms, though usually not right away. It typically takes about 60 days for inflammation to begin to resolve itself. Unfortunately, any consumption of gluten will usually trigger symptoms, which can take another 60 days of being gluten-free to alleviate. Those with severe sensitivity might need to follow the diet for nine to twelve months before becoming symptom-free.

Aside from removing specific gluten-containing grains and foods, it is recommended that all grains be eliminated for at least 30 days on the BB50 Comprehensive Elimination Diet. The grains we are consuming in modern times have a much different and higher protein content than ever before. There is mounting research that cross-contamination, processing, and genetically modified organisms (even in organic grains) have denatured the protein of grains and introduced new super toxins into our grain supply. The body cannot recognize these highly toxic compounds, which trigger an immune response and inflammation throughout the digestive tract and the body.

Adhering to a gluten-free diet is a challenge at first for most people who follow the typical high-carbohydrate American diet. Naturally, the processed food industry, recognizing a market in gluten sensitivity, has come up with a variety of unhealthy, sugar-laden, gluten-free treats. Overconsumption of these foods can cause yeast overgrowth problems and unstable blood sugar.

It's important to watch out for mislabeled products. Products advertised as "wheat-free" often contain grains such as spelt that contain gliadin. All the ingredients on the label have to be examined, not just the product name. Wheat is used as a filler and thickener in many packaged foods and can be present even in seemingly innocuous foods such as soy sauce and soup. Many of the processed foods marked "gluten free" even contain trace amounts of gluten by virtue of cross-contamination or other grains or oats used in place of gluten-containing grains.

The Craving for Gluten

One reason many gluten-sensitive people have trouble following a gluten-free diet is that they crave the very foods that they need to eliminate. When you consume the grains that cause intestinal damage, the stress causes the body to release natural opiates that are aptly named gluteomorphins. These morphine-like compounds cause a pleasurable feeling when you eat them. Have you ever eaten a large bowl of pasta or a pastry and had a "drugged" feeling? This is the gluteomorphin high. Hours later, the subsequent drop in the levels of these morphine-like brain chemicals can trigger a craving for gluten—a craving for that good feeling. When these folks give up gluten for good, they may experience terrible withdrawal and detox reactions.



When I recommend that clients give up gluten, they often react like addicts being told to give up their drug of choice. And when they do eliminate gluten, the period of temporary discomfort, thought to result from a temporary drop in the opiate levels in the brain, makes it all the more difficult. If you eliminate a food that triggers an opiate reaction, the resulting drop in your natural “high” can renew craving for the food in a vicious cycle of addiction. In these cases, withdrawal symptoms such as headache, nausea, tremors, difficulty sleeping, depression, or irritability may occur for several days or weeks after eliminating gluten. On the other hand, some people stop eating gluten and feel better right away. The level of discomfort experienced seems to be proportional to the level of gluten sensitivity present.

Within two months of following a gluten-free diet, most of the physical cravings disappear. The stronger the gluten sensitivity and the associated craving, the more dramatic the response one may experience being gluten-free. Some people will slip back into eating foods that trigger reactions and may need ongoing work with a nutritionist and even psychological counseling to stay on course.

The more often that a person consumes gluten, or any food to which they are sensitive or allergic, the more they risk developing multiple food allergies or sensitivities. This is due to leaky gut syndrome, where the inflammation in the gut literally allows food particles to leak out of the intestinal tract and into the bloodstream where they are marked as antigens. Whenever that food is consumed, the body mounts an immune attack to the perceived invader it marked as an antigen, and a new food allergy is born. The most common allergenic foods aside from gluten are dairy, soy, beef, nuts, fish, citrus, and chocolate.

There is mounting evidence that all grains—even those marked as organic— in the U.S. are becoming increasingly contaminated with genetically modified organisms and processed toxins that the immune system doesn’t recognize, causing systemic inflammation and upping our risk for leaky gut and autoimmune diseases. Even gluten-free grains and processed foods are *not* safe from cross-contamination. We as a population are becoming increasingly grain sensitive, and our health is suffering as a result.

Gluten sensitivity goes far beyond intestinal destruction: Gluten can attack other tissues in the body—most notably, the brain. Degeneration of brain tissues and neurons and lesions on brain tissue have surfaced in the brain scans of gluten sensitive people.



Grains

The USDA food pyramid tells us that grains should make up the base of our diets, and where has this advice gotten us? With obesity rates on the rise and diabetes showing up in young children, clearly a grain-based diet isn't keeping us slim and healthy. Grains are processed, high carbohydrate foods that break down into sugar over time, so they have the ability to cause fatigue and unstable blood sugar levels, especially in carb and sugar sensitive individuals. Grains also contain certain anti-nutrients that block absorption of minerals and other nutrients. The protein portion of grains is covered in a sticky protein called lectin that contributes to inflammation in the digestive tract. Grains include wheat, rye, spelt, bulgur, corn, semolina, oats, couscous, triticale, durum flour, rice, quinoa, millet, bulgur, buckwheat, amaranth, etc. Examples of refined grain-based foods are granola, cereal, bread, bagels, muffins, scones, cookies, baked goods, croissants, English muffins, flour tortillas, pancakes, waffles, pasta, brown rice pasta, pita bread, etc.

Dairy

Dairy products include milk, cream, yogurt, kefir, cheese, cottage cheese, ice cream, gelato, frozen yogurt, etc. Many people discover that they respond poorly to dairy products once they've removed them, since the symptoms of lactose intolerance tend to be quite clearly relieved on a dairy-free diet. Lactose intolerance is quite common and often goes unnoticed until dairy is removed and reintroduced. Dairy contributes to congestion, hay fever type symptoms, gas, bloating, diarrhea, and other digestive woes. Many people can tolerate unpasteurized or raw dairy products because they contain the enzymes that help the body digest dairy, and these enzymes are killed during the high heat pasteurization process. Raw dairy products include raw butter, raw milk, raw kefir, and raw cheeses.

Soy

Soy consumption has become quite controversial. Once considered a magic bullet, soy was thought to offer cardio-protective properties, cancer prevention, and menopause relief. We now know that soy consumption is linked to hormonal cancers, thyroid issues, impaired fertility, food allergies, and infant abnormalities.

The majority of soy produced in the U.S. has been genetically modified. Genetic modification provides resistance to toxic herbicides, but the result is that soy plants contain genes from bacteria that produce a protein that has never been part of the human food supply. It is still too early for us to see the repercussions of genetically modified foods in our diet, but consumption has been loosely linked to stomach cancers and increase in food allergies. In addition, soy is very difficult to digest and contains many anti-nutrients that prevent absorption of minerals. Soy also contains high levels of plant estrogens that mimic the body's natural estrogens, and consumption of soy products can cause estrogen dominance in certain individuals. Estrogen dominance raises one's risk of hormonal cancers and female hormone issues.

In our food supply, we very rarely consume whole soy. It is processed into soy flours, soy oil, soy protein isolate and hydrolyzed soy protein and is ubiquitous in our food supply because it is cheap to produce. It's used in processed foods as filler, and is a main ingredient in vegetarian fare, protein powders, supplements, and protein bars.



Avoid processed soy (soy protein isolate, hydrolyzed soy protein, etc.) at all cost. Many who are sensitive to gluten are also allergic to soy and soy products. Part of this may stem from the ways in which soy has been genetically modified, and the frequency with which it is used as a food additive. Fermented soy products such as miso, natto, and tempeh are usually ok. After a long fermentation process, the phytate levels of soybeans are reduced, making them much easier to digest. Because soy allergy is so common, remove it from the diet for at least a month and reintroduce it to see if it causes unpleasant symptoms such as indigestion or bloating.

Legumes

Like grains, legumes are high carb foods that contain lectins. Many people have difficulty digesting legumes, which can cause fatigue, bloating, and blood sugar instability in sensitive individuals. Legumes include all beans except green (black beans, white beans, butter beans, lima beans, adzuki beans, pinto beans, navy beans, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, etc.), lentils and soy beans. As part of the Comprehensive Elimination Diet, you'll avoid legumes. Then after 30 days, you can add them back in slowly to determine your carb tolerance.