

Food Allergies Stir a Mother to Action

Robyn O'Brien used to roll her eyes when a child with a peanut allergy showed up at a birthday party. Then, two years ago, she fed her youngest child scrambled eggs. Her baby's face swelled into a grotesque mask.

This led her to an examination of the perplexing world of childhood food allergies, and she soon came to the conclusion that there is a conspiracy that threatens the health of America's children. And she believes it is up to her and parents everywhere to stop it.

Her theory that the food supply is being manipulated with additives, genetic modification, hormones and herbicides, causing increases in allergies, autism and other disorders in children, has made her a populist hero among parents looking for answers regarding why their children have food allergies.

O'Brien recommends that people throw out their non-organic, processed, genetically modified, artificially created, or hormone-laced food. Once she did it, her four children's health problems cleared right up.

Sources:

* New York Times January 9, 2008

Dr. Joseph Mercola's comments:

Despite this New York Times' reporter stating that no one knows whether food allergies are actually rising as fast as some people believe, a 2006 study published in the medical journal Thorax found a 400 percent increase in hospitalizations due to food allergies in the UK since 1990. Admissions for anaphylaxis increased by 600 percent.

Food allergies send another 30,000 to the emergency room each year.

The Difference Between Allergies and Sensitivities

Allergies occur when your immune system overreacts to environmental triggers, causing tissue inflammation, organ dysfunction and an array of other symptoms.

Sensitivities on the other hand may include both true allergies and/or reactions that are not triggered by your immune system. So whereas allergies typically trigger immediate antibody reactions in your bloodstream, sensitivities trigger slower responses within your cells.

Signs of Food Sensitivities and Allergies

Are there certain foods you crave often, such as milk, ice cream, pasta or bread, for example? Ironically, the foods you crave are often the foods that cause you problems; that you have sensitivity to.

Other questions that can help you determine whether or not you might have a food sensitivity or allergy are:

Do you experience bloating after meals, gas, frequent belching, or any kind of digestive problems?

Do you have chronic constipation or diarrhea?

Do you have a stuffy nose after meals?

Do you have low energy or feel drowsy after eating?

Do you have frequent headaches or migraines?

Does anyone in your family have food allergies?

Which Foods are the Most Allergenic?

Topping the list of the most allergenic foods are:

- * Pasteurized milk
- * Soy
- * Wheat (gluten)

If you think you're suffering from a food allergy, avoiding these foods is a good place to start. You can also be sensitive to food additives like artificial colors, preservatives and flavor enhancers (MSG), so avoiding processed foods can also help. And, although the jury is still out on the health effects of cloned foods, I am willing to bet they're not without ramifications.

How to Figure Out What Foods You're Allergic to

One of the best things you can do if you believe you are suffering from a food allergy is to do a diet elimination challenge. Simply remove all foods that contain what you believe you are allergic to and see if your symptoms improve over the next few days. You may need to go as long as five days to give it a full trial.

If the symptoms disappear in one day, of course you have your answer. The real clincher, though, is to reintroduce the food or drink (on an empty

stomach). If the suspected food is the culprit you will generally be able to feel the symptoms return within an hour.

This can be difficult if you eat a lot of processed foods, as these often contain "hidden" ingredients like corn, milk, soy, wheat, yeast and artificial additives that are often problematic. The most suspect foods will be those eaten daily or more than once a week, as well as foods that you crave or eat at night.

In extreme cases where it is difficult to isolate the offending food, you may even need to go on a fast to see if your symptoms resolve.

Why You Should Always Address Your Food Allergies

After you identify what foods you are allergic to, you will want to avoid them as much as possible. Your symptoms will likely disappear or improve once you reduce your exposure.

If you don't take measures to address food allergies, you can end up with permanent, long-term damage. Allergies can put constant and unnecessary stress on the immune system that will weaken it over time, possibly leading to chronic or degenerative disease.

As an added bonus, eliminating your food sensitivities and allergies can also help you lose weight!

How?

When you eat a food that you are sensitive to, it causes a series of negative biochemical reactions in your immune system and digestive tract that can hinder your weight loss efforts. It also decreases your serotonin levels, which can make you feel slightly depressed, causing you to turn to simple sugars and carbohydrates for relief.