



FOOD INTOLERANCE

What is food intolerance?

Food intolerance is the term used for food hypersensitivities other than food allergy or coeliac disease that do not involve the immune system, and may or may not be fully understood.



Finding out how common food intolerances are is very difficult.

2–20%

Estimates of how common food intolerances are vary widely.

1–23

Anywhere from 1–23 in every 10,000 people could be intolerant to food additives.

1 IN 20

Adults on the island of Ireland estimated to be lactose intolerant.

Symptoms of food intolerance

Unlike food allergy, the symptoms of a food intolerance reaction are generally not immediate and not life-threatening.

Digestive Symptoms

Nausea, stomach pain, diarrhoea, vomiting, flatulence and bloating.

Skin symptoms

Redness or urticaria (hives).

Other symptoms

Headaches, jitteriness and joint pain.

Link

There is evidence of a link to Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

! If undiagnosed, a food intolerance may affect your health over the long-term.



Food intolerance testing

Testing

- Many tests for diagnosing food intolerance have not been scientifically validated.
- This includes tests based on IgG which may actually be a measure of tolerance to a food, not intolerance.
- The only real test is to avoid the suspect food and then reintroduce it into your diet to see how this affects your symptoms.
- A diet low in FODMAPs (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols) may provide relief for some people with food intolerance.



Causes of food intolerance

Research worldwide is focused on identifying the causes



Pharmacological

Examples include reaction to caffeine in coffee, tyramine in cheese or sulphites in red wine.



Abnormal digestion

Examples include lactose intolerance caused by a deficiency in the enzyme lactase that helps us digest milk and dairy products.



Unknown reasons

A great many triggers of intolerance reactions are still unknown including reactions to food additives such as tartrazine.

Managing a food intolerance

Diagnosis

- Seek professional advice before eliminating foods or food groups from your diet.
- Consult your GP who may recommend further tests or consultations.



Management

- Once the food has been properly identified, you must try to minimise (not eliminate) this in your diet.
- Removing more than one food or a whole food group from your diet means that you must get these nutrients from another source.
- Beware of unproven tests that may give you misleading answers.