

Elimination Diet Protocol

A person can be (or can become) sensitive to any food or ingredient. There are many reasons why we react negatively to foods, including a lack of good bacteria, overexposure to specific foods or ingredients, and poor digestive habits. A food elimination diet is an easy and inexpensive method of determining which foods may be causing unfavourable reactions such as gas, bloating, indigestion, skin conditions, and more.

There are four main steps to an elimination diet:

Step 1 – Planning

Choose a convenient time to conduct this protocol, not while traveling or during significant holidays or family events. Keep a diet journal for a week, listing the foods you eat and keeping track of the symptoms you have throughout the day. (See the last page of this handout for a chart you can use). It is helpful to ask yourself a few key questions:

- What foods do I eat most often?
- What foods do I crave?
- What foods do I eat to “feel better”?
- What foods would I have trouble giving up?



Often, these seem to be the foods that are most important to try not to eat. Make a list of foods and ingredients suspected of causing your symptoms. If you are not sure eliminate all of the following foods that are most commonly linked to food sensitivities:

- Dairy products, including milk, cream, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, butter, ice cream, and frozen yogurt
- Gluten, avoiding any foods that contain wheat, spelt, kamut, oats, rye, barley, or malt.
- Soy
- Alcohol and caffeine and all products that may contain these ingredients (including sodas, cold preparations, herbal tinctures).
- Foods containing yeast or foods that promote yeast overgrowth, including processed foods, refined sugars, cheeses, commercially prepared condiments, peanuts, vinegar and alcoholic beverages
- Simple sugars such as candy, sweets and processed foods

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Step 2 – Avoiding

For **two weeks**, follow the elimination diet without any exceptions. Don't eat the foods whole or as ingredients in other foods. For example, if you are avoiding all dairy products, you need to check labels for whey, casein, and lactose so you can avoid them as well. Maintain a food diary throughout to record foods eaten, and to note symptoms or changes in symptoms. *For the first 14 days, consume only the foods listed below.* If there are any foods on this list you know or suspect you may be sensitive to, eliminate them as well.

Food Group	Eat	Avoid
Meat, fish, poultry	chicken, turkey, lamb, cold water fish	red meat, processed meats, eggs and egg substitutes
Dairy	rice, soy, nut milks	milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt
Legumes	all legumes (beans, lentils)	none
Vegetables	all	creamed or processed
Fruit	fresh, preferably organic	strawberries, citrus
Starch	potatoes, rice, buckwheat, millet, quinoa	gluten and corn containing products (pastas, breads, chips)
Breads/cereal	any made from rice, quinoa, amaranth, buckwheat, teff, millet, soy or potato flour, arrowroot	all made from wheat, spelt, kamut, rye, barley
Soups	clear, vegetable-based	canned or creamed
Beverages	fresh or unsweetened fruit/vegetable juices, herbal teas, filtered/spring water	dairy, coffee/tea, alcohol, citrus drinks, sodas
Fats and oils	cold/expeller pressed, unrefined light-shielded canola, flax, olive refined oils, salad dressings, pumpkin, sesame, and walnut oils	margarine, shortening, butter, and spreads

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Nuts and seeds	almonds, cashews, pecans, flax, pumpkin, sesame, sunflower seeds, and butters from allowed nuts	peanuts, pistachios, peanut butter
Sweeteners	brown rice syrup, fruit sweeteners	brown sugar, honey, fructose, molasses, corn syrup

Many people notice that in the first week, especially in the first few days, their symptoms will become worse before they start to improve. If your symptoms become severe or increase for more than a day or two, consult your healthcare practitioner.

Supplementations: The following supplements may be used for the duration of the elimination diet protocol:

- A good quality probiotic
- Plant-based digestive enzymes (with and between meals)
- A high-quality multivitamin
- Essential fatty acids
- L-glutamine, 5-20 g a day on an empty stomach

Step 3 – Challenging

If symptoms have improved after 7 to 10 days, this is a good indicator that the offending food was removed. This source will become more obvious as foods are re-introduced one at a time. If your symptoms have not improved in two weeks, stop the diet and talk with your healthcare practitioner about whether or not to try it again with a different combination of foods.

After two weeks, if your symptoms have improved, you can start “challenging” your body with the eliminated foods, one food group at a time. As you do this, keep a written record of your symptoms.

To “challenge” your body, add a new food group every three days. It takes three days to be sure that your symptoms have time to come back if they are going to. On the day you try an eliminated food for the first time, start with just a small amount in the morning. If you don’t notice any symptoms, eat two larger portions in the afternoon and evening. After a day of eating the new food, remove it, and wait for two days to see if you notice the symptoms.

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If a food doesn't cause symptoms during a challenge, it is unlikely to be a problem food and can be added back into your diet. However, don't add the food back until you have tested all the other foods on your list. Below is an example of a recommended order for re-introducing foods.

- Dairy (in the form of whole milk or plain yogurt)
- Eggs
- Wheat
- Citrus
- Yeast
- Corn
- Gluten

Example of an Elimination Diet Calendar

Day Number	Step
1	Begin Elimination Diet
2-7	You may notice symptoms worsen for a day or two
8-14	Symptoms should go away if the right foods have been removed
15	Re-introduce food #1 (for example: dairy)
16-17	Stop food #1 and watch for symptoms *
18	Re-introduce food #2 (for example: wheat)
19-20	Stop food #2 and watch for symptoms *
21	Re-introduce food #3
	... And so on

**You only eat a new food for one day. Do not add it back into your meal plan again until the elimination diet is over*

Step 4 – Creating a New, Long-Term Diet

Based on your results, you and your health care practitioner can help you plan a diet to prevent your symptoms. Some things to keep in mind:

- A lot of other factors (such as a stressful day at work) could interfere with the results. Try to keep things as constant as possible while you are on the diet
- Some people have problems with more than one food
- Be sure that you are getting adequate nutrition during the elimination diet and as you change your diet for the long-term. For example, if you give up dairy, you must supplement your calcium from other sources like green leafy vegetables.

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4 Day Elimination Diet Food Diary

(Log foods eaten and times. Note the symptoms you have and what time as well)

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Morning Food				
Morning Symptoms				
Afternoon Food				
Afternoon Symptoms				
Evening Food				
Evening Symptoms				

Source: <https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/integrative/modules>