

Food allergies and intolerances

By Lucy Kelly

There has been a lot in the press recently about food allergies and worry that people have been self-diagnosing and unnecessarily cutting foods out of their diets without professional help.

It is important to understand the types of food allergy and the difference between an allergy and an intolerance.

A food allergy is where the body produces antibodies against the protein component of a specific food. There are 2 types of food allergy, which both involve the immune system and it is important to distinguish between the two:

1) The 'classical' or 'true' food allergy is where the symptoms are immediate and usually severe. These allergies are caused by IgE antibodies and produce symptoms such as swelling, itching and breathing difficulties. Peanuts are the typical example of a food that causes this type of allergy.

2) The IgG mediated food allergy, (often confusingly referred to as a food intolerance), tend to produce less extreme, usually delayed symptoms and can therefore difficult to pinpoint. Symptoms include bloating, migraine, itchy skin, headaches, constipation and many more.

A food intolerance is where the body fails to produce enough of an enzyme and does not involve the immune system. Lactose intolerance is an example and is common in people of Southern Europe or of African descent. The symptoms of a lactose intolerance are diarrhoea, stomach pain and bloating after eating dairy products.

As a nutritional therapist, I can help pinpoint offending foods by looking at a food diary and discussing your symptoms. I can support you through a suitable trial food elimination programme or arrange a blood test to identify whether you have an IgG food allergy.

For more information contact Lucy Kelly via www.lucykellynutrition.co.uk



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