

# Food intolerance.

A food intolerance refers to difficulty digesting certain foods and having an unpleasant reaction to them. It causes symptoms such as bloating and stomach pain, which usually come on a few hours after eating the food (NHS).



## Are you intolerant to certain foods?

In general, people who have food intolerance tend to experience bloating, stomach pain, wind and/or diarrhoea, or sometimes develop skin rashes and itching within a few hours after eating the food they are intolerant to.

If you experience any of these, contact your GP who will be able to discuss your symptoms and advise you correctly, as these are also symptoms of many other conditions.

## What causes a food intolerance?

It's often unclear what causes a person to be sensitive to particular foods. Lactose intolerance can mean your body finds it difficult to digest milk, yogurts and soft cheeses. Another common culprit is wheat, as are food additives, chemicals or contaminants such as:

- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Artificial sweeteners
- Histamine (found in Quorn, mushrooms, pickled and cured foods and alcoholic drinks)
- Artificial food colours, preservatives or flavour enhancers

## Food intolerance tests.

There are no tests for food intolerances, so to identify if you have one you'll need to keep an eye on your symptoms and the food you eat. A food diary is a great tool to help you do this.

## Keep a food diary.

- Record the foods you eat and the symptoms you have and when these occur
- Once you have a good idea as to which food(s) may be causing your symptoms, you can try excluding them from your diet, one at a time, and observing the effect this has. Try over two to six weeks and see if your symptoms improve

- Then, reintroduce the food to see if symptoms return. You may find you can tolerate a certain level and you only get symptoms if you have more than this amount

It is important not to eliminate common foodstuffs from your diet without consulting a medical professional, especially in growing children.

## Food labels.

All packaged food in the UK and the EU is covered by a law on allergen labelling. This means you can tell whether or not a product is suitable for you by reading the ingredients list. For example, if gluten has been used as an ingredient in the product, it must be listed in the ingredients list, no matter how little is used.

## A food intolerance is not the same as a food allergy.

A food allergy is a reaction from your immune system where it mistakenly treats proteins found in food as a threat. It can trigger allergy symptoms such as a rash, wheezing and itching. Just a small amount of the food you're allergic to can bring on these symptoms which can occur quite quickly.

Common food allergies in adults are fish, shellfish and nuts. In children, it can be milk and eggs in addition to peanuts, other nuts and fish.

Food allergies can be serious.



Food allergies and intolerances affect around 8% of children and 2% of adults in the UK.

Food Standards Agency (FSA)