

# Dealing with food intolerances.

Having a food intolerance can mean changing your eating habits. Learn more about intolerances, how they're different to allergies and how to manage them.



# Food intolerance in the UK

Some estimates suggest that 45% of the population could be suffering from food intolerance.

Allergies often hit the headlines, but it's important to understand the difference between a food allergy and an intolerance.

An allergy involves the immune system, while an intolerance impacts the digestive system.

A food intolerance or sensitivity presents when you find it hard to digest a certain food.

The most common symptoms include flatulence, bloated stomach, stomach pain and diarrhoea.

Other symptoms include migraines, fatigue, joint pain and skin disorders.

## Intolerance and allergy: what's the difference?

- Symptoms usually occur a few hours after eating the food you're intolerant to
- Food intolerance is not life-threatening, unlike food allergy
- You have to eat more food to trigger an intolerance than an allergy
- Allergies are often to particular foods, and intolerances involve a substance in several foods eg gluten or lactose

## Common intolerances

Some of the most common intolerances are lactose and wheat. If you experience digestive problems after eating dairy products, you may have a lactose intolerance. The same goes for wheat: if bread makes you bloated and gives you wind, it's wheat sensitivity that could be causing your symptoms.

If you've ruled out lactose and wheat, it may be another additive or substance you are intolerant to, like:

- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Histamines (in Quorn, mushrooms, pickled foods)
- Artificial food colours or preservatives

## Elimination diets

Elimination diets are a good way to get to the bottom of what might be triggering your food intolerance.

If you suspect a particular food is causing your symptoms, eliminate it from your diet for up to a month to see what difference this makes.

Reintroduce the food following the elimination. Keep a note of what difference this makes and any symptoms you experience.

## Try a low-FODMAP diet

Following a low-FODMAP diet could be a long-term way to successfully manage your food intolerances. A low FODMAP diet is used to help people suffering from stomach pain/discomfort which could be caused by IBS or another digestion condition.

Many foods are high in FODMAPs – carbohydrates that move through your system undigested. Research has shown that your odds of improving stomach pain are 81% greater if you follow a low FODMAP diet

### High-FODMAP foods include:

- Wheat
- Garlic
- Onions
- Beans and lentils
- Some vegetables eg cauliflower and mushrooms
- Sweeteners – like honey and sorbitol

### Low-FODMAP foods include:

- Oats
- Brown rice
- Some vegetables – eg tomato and spinach
- Tofu
- Eggs
- Some fruits including blueberries and oranges

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