

The Elimination Diet

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I have been suggesting to patients to avoid dairy, grains and the Night Shade vegetables (tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, and potatoes) as well as Navy and Pinto beans due to their impact on the immune system. But I have suggested that most nuts and many other beans including peanut butter were not going to be a problem in most of us.

But recently a very close friend of mine developed intestinal inflammation so I went back to research the elimination diet. The current recommendations are, in addition to avoiding the foods mentioned above, there was a strong suggestion to also avoid most nuts and beans (including almonds, cashews and peanuts) as well as to limit many other foods due to their higher lectin content.

One way to think about this is that plants have developed these lectins as a method to discourage animals (including humans) from eating them. This is like our genetic modification of plants to discourage insects and fungus from consuming our corn, soybeans, wheat and papaya, to mention a few GMO products. The fungus and insects do avoid the GMO plants, but many people still eat the GMO plants.

In a similar fashion, we consume plants containing large concentrations of lectins that stimulate our immune system in an unfavorable way leading to gut inflammation, arthritis with pain and subsequent joint destruction, and a variety of other autoimmune disorders.

My suggestion is that if you have an inflammatory disorder (allergies, asthma, joint pains, irritable bowel syndrome, vascular disease, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, fatigue, fibromyalgia, etc), it may be worthwhile to follow the elimination diet for a minimum of 4-6 weeks to see if you feel better. Then begin to slowly add individual foods back, one food every 3-5 days. When your symptoms recur, again eliminate the recently added foods to see if you can sort out which foods are linked to your symptoms.

The elimination diet is not actually this straightforward, but this is a reasonable start. Certain foods (like eggs and yeast) can cause sensitivity but have no lectins, so it makes sense to eliminate them initially, adding them back early during the reintroduction phase. The foods containing histamine (fermented foods like sauerkraut and pickles) can also be a challenge for some individuals. I have noted some of these exceptions in the listing on pages 2-3.

The following two pages is a listing of foods in groups of the various levels of restriction, derived and confirmed from multiple sources. Start with focusing on eating from the first three groups, avoiding most of the foods in groups 4-7. This includes avoiding dairy, most of the grains (except quinoa), most of the beans (except green bean varieties) including eliminating peanut butter and most of the nuts and nut butters (except perhaps macadamia nuts and sunflower seed butter).

All the cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel's sprouts, etc.) are good, and given the limitations of choices, there are many more fruits mentioned and acceptable, although the citrus may still be a problem for those with allergic rhinitis and asthma. Goat cheese may be ok for some and not others.

But I also continue to follow and recommend a low glycemic diet, avoiding simple sugars and excess fruit consumption because sugars promote the growth of pathogenic bacteria in our intestines (our microbiome) while the green leafy vegetables with fiber promote the protective and productive bacteria.

The most difficult part of this for me is the elimination of most nuts and peanut butter as well as garbanzos (chickpeas). Fortunately, the Carlson's fish oil is still good for you!

Best wishes, George Steele MD

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#1=Least Inflammatory from Lectin Perspective

All oils are good, with olive oil, caprylic acid, ghee and hemp oil being the best choices.

Beef-grass fed	Nutritional Yeast (avoid initially)
Chicken-free range	Italian Seasoning
Salmon-wild	Curry
Sardines	Caffeine-free kombucha* (*Histamine tolerant)
Beef or chicken liver	Apple cider vinegar
Pea protein	Leafy Greens
Rice Protein	Steamed kale
Hemp protein	Steamed spinach
Collagen	Sauer kraut*
Animal fat	Pickles*
Safflower Oil	Mushrooms
Extra virgin olive oil	Steamed broccoli
Hemp oil	Steamed collard greens
Grapeseed oil	Steamed green beans
Avocado oil	Decaf tea
Ghee	Carob
Coconut oil (from a lectin point of view)	Mustard
Black Cumin Seed Oil	Sriracha
Romaine lettuce	Vanilla
Cucumbers	Cinnamon
Celery	Most spices
Broccoli Sprouts	Spirulina
Brewer's Yeast (avoid initially)	

#2= Not Perfect, But Good Enough

Anchovies	Watermelon (seedless)
Pork	Honeydew
Eggs (avoid initially)	Golden berries
Purple sweet potatoes	Cooked tempeh
Cantaloupe	Beef gelatin
Mango	Garlic
Avocados	Onions
Papaya	Sugar snap peas
Pineapple	Snow peas
Blueberries	Green beans
Pomegranate	

#3=OK

Fully sprouted lentils	Grapefruit
Summer Squash	Oranges
Japanese sweet potatoes	Kiwi
Arrowroot	Guava
Sunflower seeds	Pears
Coconut shreds	Blackberries
Chia seeds	Raspberries
Coconut Milk	Cherries
Sesame seeds	Cranberries
Soaked/sprouted quinoa	Apples
Hemp seeds	Strawberries
Dates (maybe a #3)	Plums
Tangerines	Yams

#4 = Avoid If Lectin Sensitive

Tomato
Eggplant
Bell peppers and hot peppers
Potatoes
Brown rice
Chickpeas (garbanzos, humus)
Lentils (un-soaked, unsprouted)
Corn on the cob
Semi-green bananas
Basmati White rice
Parboiled rice
Soaked lentils
Cassava
Plantains
Winter Squash

Beets
Kale chips
Jasmine Tea (small amount of caffeine)
Carrots
Pumpkin
Pistachio nuts
Skinned almonds
Olives
Walnuts
Almonds
Brazil nuts
Wild blueberries
Peaches
Nectarines

#5 Avoid if you have any form of food sensitivities

Herring (amines)
Sourdough bread
Mouldy cheeses
Ripe bananas
Figs
Raisins
Sprouted buckwheat/Go Raw Granola
Grapes
Whey (different types can be more or less)
Hummus without additives
Chocolate/Cocoa (including raw cacao)

Caffeine
White potatoes
Most legumes
Beta-lactoglobulin
Oats
Unmodified Potato starch
Orange sweet potatoes
Tuna
Buckwheat (unsoaked)
Kefir

#6 Never Consume These

Yeast (found in gluten free bread)
Gluten-containing grains and all grains not listed elsewhere.
Carrageenan
Almond milk, nut milks

Cashews
Peanuts
Pinto beans
Kidney beans
Various legumes

#7 Most Inflammatory=NO

Gluten
Gluten containing foods also have wheat germ agglutinin (WGA), which is also quite inflammatory

Casein (protein in all dairy)