Elimination/Challenge Diet

Note: Make sure there are no holidays including birthdays or other parties during this process, as they are very difficult to handle when you can’t eat almost anything.

Start a small journal and keep meticulous notes throughout the process of how you feel and what you eat. It is amazingly easy to completely forget what seems important today, and we must have good information to be able to analyze the results of this test.

It is much easier if you plan ahead and make sure that no other tempting foods are present in the house during this diet. Do not go out to eat if you can possibly help it, as it is impossible to know what other ingredients might be added at most restaurants.

Elimination Phase

During this phase almost all foods are avoided to allow the immune system to stop responding. Though initially ok, this quickly becomes the most difficult and grueling part of the experience. However, it is critical not to have even small amounts of other foods as they can disrupt the entire process and require starting over.

If you are of European descent, eat only these foods:
- Yams and sweet potatoes
- Lamb
- White rice (not brown) or quinoa (if you’ve never eaten it before)
- Pears
- Salt (the smallest amounts possible, or none if you can stand it)
- Water

Use the oil/fat from the lamb for cooking. If you absolutely must have some other oil, then use a very small amount of canola oil, as refined as you can get it. Use as little as possible.

The hardest part is what to eat for breakfast. Try cream of rice cereal with dried pears.

If you are of Middle Eastern descent (Arab, Jewish, Persian, etc.) or are vegetarian, eat the above foods but substitute the strangest beans you can find for the lamb. Eat only types of beans you have never eaten before as far as you can remember. Aduki or adzuki and Anasazi beans are good choices.

If you are of Asian descent, do not eat white rice, but instead eat quinoa.

Some odd-ball foods you could also eat, assuming you rarely if ever do (often expensive):

Animal products: emu, ostrich, rattlesnake, buffalo, deer, elk, rabbit, caribou, goat

Fruit and veggies: star fruit, daikon radish, durian, dragon fruit, nopal (cactus pad), rutabaga, parsnips, cherimoya, pummelo, kiwano melon (horned melon), samphire, various seaweeds, arugula, tomatillo, jicama, kumquat, salsify, dandelion greens, nettle greens, lotus root, alfalfa, quince

Grains: teff, amaranth, wild rice, hemp seed

Oils: hemp, walnut, pumpkin seed

Sweetener: agave, stevia

Continue this for at least 10 days, and ideally 14.

Challenge Phase

Plan ahead by having the first few foods you plan to challenge ready and available. Have a written plan of which foods to be eaten and when in your calendar. Record each food challenged including amounts, times, and any reactions.
Procedure: eat a reasonable helping of as pure a form of the food as possible (with no other ingredients present) at one meal on one day. For the rest of that day and the next day, do not eat any more of that food. On the second day following, challenge the next food item.

If you notice significant symptoms, whether they match your old symptoms or are new, any time up to right before you challenge the next food, record them and consider it a positive challenge. Do not introduce that food back into your diet. If you didn’t notice any symptoms, then consider it a negative challenge and it is now ok to eat that food again any way you choose. If the symptoms are obviously due to something else like catching a cold virus, do not consider it a positive challenge.

Suggested beginning plan of reintroduction (based on most common allergens and what is most useful flavor-wise to reintroduce):
* Broccoli or another green vegetable—eat raw or lightly steamed
* Apple or another more common fruit
* A bean not that commonly eaten
* Goat or sheep cheese

Then start bring in the big allergens, alternating them with other foods:
* Wheat—use cream of wheat
* Tomato—eat whole tomato or slices
* Dairy—drink a glass of cow’s milk. Because cheese and yogurt contain other ingredients they should not be challenged and only added after yeast is challenged (in the case of cheese).
* Baker’s Yeast—if wheat and dairy were negative challenges, eat a slice of white bread with the only ingredients of flour, water, milk or milk products, salt, and yeast. If wheat or dairy were a problem then use nutritional or brewer’s yeast to challenge.
* Olive oil
* Beef or chicken (if you are not vegetarian), lamb if it was being avoided
* Lettuce or another vegetable

Usually after about three months of challenging we can discuss stopping challenging depending on what is happening.

Once your symptoms are improved, it is then necessary to do other treatments to correct the underlying problems that cause “leaky gut” which is a big part of the problem causing food reactions. In most cases, just eliminating the foods you are currently reacting to does not correct the problem, and you will just react to other foods you are now eating more often. In other words, it isn’t that the food is toxic, it is that your body is absorbing large chunks of it, your gut bacteria are abnormal, and your immune system is hyperreactive. This requires an individualized program to correct, and is critical.

Avoidance Phase
Foods that provoked symptoms should be eliminated completely for six months minimum.

Rotation Phase
After the avoidance phase, try eating the allergenic food again one day. Note any symptoms that arise from this over the next 3 days and write them down. If none occur, try eating it every 4-5 days but not every day. Do not start eating them every day until you have no apparent symptoms for at least six months. Then you can go to eating them every other day.