

## FMSW: Food Allergies/ Elimination Diets

**Elimination diets** remove a few or many suspected foods from the diet to learn whether or not certain foods could be causing your symptoms or making them worse. In addition to helping make the diagnosis, the diet can also become a way to treat these symptoms. Symptoms that may be affected by diet include asthma, migraine, eczema, abdominal pains, arthritis, or other problems.

Sometimes the foods involved will surprise you. It may actually be the foods you eat most often or the foods you crave that are making you ill.

The process involves

1. **Removing** the offending foods for **2 weeks** – it can take this long for symptoms to clear.
  - This diet is **not** forever! Be warned that sometimes symptoms will get worse in the first week. This is not a sign you should stop the diet.
  - **This can also be tricky – foods can be hidden as ingredients in other foods. Read labels carefully, and see the list of Hidden Foods.** It is best if you make your own foods from scratch during this period, so you will not be fooled by ingredients in prepared foods.
2. **Challenging**
  - If your symptoms are not changed in 2 weeks, stop the diet and talk to your provider about whether to try again with a different combination of foods
  - If your symptoms have improved, start “challenging” your body with eliminated foods, one food at a time. Add back a new food every 2 or three days and keep a written diary of your reactions. (This means one ingredient at a time – e.g. add tomatoes, not pizza!)
  - When you add a food back, start with a small serving in the morning. If there are no symptoms, eat larger portions in the afternoon and evening. Symptoms may take up to 2 days to appear after adding back a food that causes symptoms.
  - If a food causes symptoms. Cut it out again and make a note of this. You may want to challenge yourself one more time in the future to be sure this is a food you react to.

The different strategies that can be used to design an elimination diet cut out increasing numbers of foods – the stricter the diet, the more likely it will identify the foods that are the problem, but the more difficult it will be to follow.

1. **Single Food Elimination.** The simplest elimination diet removes a single food that seems to have caused symptoms in the past.
2. **Probability Multiple Elimination Diet.** When no single food can be identified as a suspect, a **probability multiple-elimination diet** may be formulated to eliminate common offenders, i.e. foods that are known by previous experience with other patients to have a high probability of allergenicity. For example, eliminate all the foods on the “Common Food Allergens” list on the other side.
3. **Oligoantigenic Diet.** This diet limits the foods eaten to a very narrow list of foods that are not likely to cause reactions. For instance, pick one grain like rice, one or two meats, like lamb or turkey, one or two vegetables like zucchini or broccoli, and eat nothing but these and salt and water.
4. **Modified Fast.** Eat no food and drink only a hypoallergenic shake for the 10 day – 2 week period, or until symptoms improve.

**Talk to your provider to decide which of these approaches is the right one for you.**

## Common Food Allergens

Egg	Citrus (oranges)	Cow's milk (and cheese, yogurt, ice cream, etc.)
Pork, beef	Chocolate/cola	Wheat (and rye, barley)
Peanuts, nuts	Corn	Soy, some other beans
Fish, shellfish	Cinnamon	Tomato

## Generally safe foods ("Hypoallergenic foods") – but some people are allergic to these foods!

celery	squash	rice	lima beans	zucchini	peach
chick peas	parsley	spinach	artichoke	apple	lentils
cucumber	potato	melon	navy beans	carrot	pear
sesame	green beans	lettuce	pumpkin	tapioca	lamb
sweet potato	maple sugar	cranberry	kasha	olive oil	cane sugar

Again, be careful! Many prepared foods have secret ingredients which may not be listed on the label. See the "Hidden Foods" list for more details. During your elimination diet, it is safest to stick with simple foods prepared at home. Be careful about chewing gum, toothpaste, medications - vitamins and others, throat lozenges, lipstick, alcohol, etc. Best of all would be to avoid these exposures if at all possible just for the time of the diet, but discuss any medications with your provider before stopping.

**Preparation:** Most people need to prepare for this process – do not expect yourself to start immediately the night you receive this handout. If you drink caffeine, taper off before starting the elimination diet.

Finally, almost no one follows any diet perfectly. If you "blow it", try to eat only a small amount of the "forbidden" food, write it down, and don't give up on the diet completely.

**After the elimination diet:** Once you have identified the foods that cause you symptoms, talk to your provider or a dietician about designing a long-term eating plan to make sure you get all the nutrients you need once you have cut out the foods you cannot tolerate.

**Hidden Foods** – "natural flavoring" or "vegetable starch" can include corn, soy, wheat, etc.

### MILK

Au Gratin  
Cream  
Baked goods  
(breads, cakes,  
cookies, etc.)  
Butter  
Casein  
Cheese  
Chocolate  
Chowders, soups  
Creamed Foods  
Custard  
Gravies  
Ice Cream  
Mashed Potatoes  
Omelets  
Pancakes, Waffles  
Salad Dressing  
Sour cream  
Whey  
Yogurt

### SOYBEANS

Cakes, Crackers  
Crisco Spray  
Lecithin  
Margarine  
Miso  
Oil  
Pastries  
Prepared meats  
Salad Dressings  
Soups  
Soy Flour, Noodles  
Soy Milk, Soy  
Protein, Soy  
Sauce, Tamari  
Tempeh  
Texturized or  
hydrolyzed  
vegetable  
protein  
Tofu  
Vegetable broth

### WHEAT

Beer, alcohol  
Baked goods:  
Breads, Biscuits,  
Cakes, Muffins,  
Cookies, Pretzels,  
Crackers  
Breaded meats  
(e.g. fried chicken)  
Bouillon Cubes  
Candy, Chocolates  
Cereals  
Corn bread, muffins  
Couscous  
Doughnuts  
Flour: white, wheat  
Gravies  
Matzos  
Packaged mixes  
Pancakes, Waffles  
Pasta, noodles  
Spelt  
Wheat Germ, Bran

### EGG

Bavarian Cream  
Breads  
Breaded Foods  
Cakes  
Egg Noodles  
French Toast  
Fritter  
Frostings  
Frying Batters  
Glazed Roll  
Hamburger Mix  
Hollandaise Sauce  
Ice Cream  
Marshmallows  
Mayonnaise  
Meat Loaf  
Meringues  
Pancakes, Waffles  
Puddings  
Salad Dressings  
Sauces  
Souffle

### CORN

Ascorbic acid  
Baking powder  
Caramel color  
Citric acid  
Confectioners sugar  
Cornmeal  
Corn oil, margarine  
Corn starch, syrup  
Erythritol  
Ethanol  
Fructose  
Glutamate, MSG  
Grits  
Hominy  
Maize  
Maltitol, Maltodextrin  
Popcorn  
Saccharin  
Simethicone  
Splenda