

Understanding Trigger Foods

Adverse food reactions are frequently overlooked as a contributor to chronic health issues. Many people who experience adverse food reactions don't realize how badly they feel or that particular foods are the cause until the foods that trigger a reaction are removed from the diet.

Adverse food reactions can trigger mental, emotional, and physical symptoms, making them hard to diagnose. Understanding common symptoms of these reactions is an important step in the healing process. The following table lists symptoms and conditions that can be associated with adverse food reactions.

Possible Food Reaction Symptoms Per Body Area
<p>Brain and Head</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Behavioral or psychiatric disorders (such as hyperactivity, anxiety, depression) · Dizziness, light-headedness, feeling faint · Headaches · Loss of consciousness · Mood swings
<p>Mouth, Nose, Throat, and Chest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Anaphylaxis · Asthma · Constriction and tightening of airways · Persistent cough · Rapid heartbeat · Respiratory problems · Runny nose or nasal congestion · Sensation of a lump in the throat, making it hard to breathe · Sneezing · Swelling of the lips, face, tongue, and throat (or other parts of the body) · Tingling or itching in the mouth · Wheezing or trouble breathing
<p>Abdominal Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting · Indigestion · Infertility, irregular periods · Stomach pain, cramps · Swelling
<p>Limbs, Hands, and Feet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Weakness, numbness, pain · Weak pulse
<p>Skin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hives, rash, itching, or eczema · Pale or blue coloring of the skin

Uncovering and Avoiding Food Triggers

Discovering which foods trigger your specific symptoms can be a frustrating process, but the knowledge gained will help your health in the long run. While people can experience adverse reactions to many different foods, most reactions are caused by corn, eggs, fish, milk (and other dairy products), peanuts, red meat, shellfish, soy, tree nuts, wheat, and yeast. During the process of discovering which foods trigger your symptoms, your healthcare practitioner may suggest temporarily removing one or more of these foods, and possibly others, from your diet.

Because the foods listed above are often used as ingredients in processed foods, you must also eliminate foods that contain them. The following table lists the eight most common food allergens and some of the processed foods where they're often found. Processed foods containing any of these eight allergens must meet specific labeling requirements in the United States. So, read the labels of packaged foods.

Remember that these foods aren't the only things to remove when avoiding trigger foods. Many other foods contain ingredients that are processed using the same equipment as common trigger foods. If those foods are contaminated during processing, they may also cause an adverse food reaction.

Some cosmetics and personal care products (such as shampoo) also contain trigger foods as ingredients and may result in symptoms. To avoid an unexpected reaction, read all labels thoroughly before using the products.

Where Common Trigger Foods Are Typically Found

Eggs

- Baked goods
- Canned soups
- Egg substitutes
- Ice cream
- Pasta
- Processed or premade meat products (meatballs, meatloaf, etc.)
- Salad dressings

Fish

- Asian cuisine (many dishes contain fish-based stocks)
- Caesar salad
- Imitation crab products
- Worcestershire sauce

Milk

- All dairy products
- Baked goods
- Canned tuna
- Chewing gum
- Protein powders
- Sausage and other meats

Peanuts

- Asian cuisine
- Baked goods (cookies, cakes, pies, etc.)
- Candies
- Cereals
- Marinades and sauces
- Mexican cuisine
- Peanut butter

Where Common Trigger Foods Are Typically Found (continued)

Shellfish

- Fish stock
- Imitation crab meat
- Seafood flavoring (e.g., crab extract)
- Sushi

Soy

- Asian cuisine
- Baked goods
- Canned broths, soups
- Canned tuna
- Chicken nuggets
- Energy bars
- Infant formula
- Nut butters
- Peanut butter (low-fat)
- Processed meats (e.g., hot dogs, sausage)
- Vodka

Tree Nuts

- Alcoholic beverages
- Asian cuisine
- Baked goods
- Baking mixes
- Breading
- Sauces

Wheat (gluten)

- Baked goods and baking mixes
- Cereals, pasta, crackers
- Hot dogs
- Ice cream
- Sauces

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