

## FOOD INTOLERANCE

*Before investigating diet as a possible cause of your symptoms, it's important to understand the difference between food intolerance and food allergies.*

Allergies are immune reactions to unique protein components of a specific food. By contrast, intolerances don't involve the immune system at all. They are triggered by various natural food chemicals and/or additives which cause reactions by irritating nerve endings in different parts of the body, rather like the way certain drugs cause side-effects.

As with drugs, people with a sensitive constitution react more readily than others to food chemicals. If you're susceptible to food intolerances, your reactions will depend on a number of factors:

### What symptoms you're prone to

Symptoms vary from person to person. The commonest ones are recurrent hives and swellings, stomach & bowel irritation, and headaches. Some people can feel vaguely unwell with flu-like aches & pains, or get unusually tired, run-down or moody. Children can be irritable and restless, with aggravation of behaviour problems such as ADHD. Babies can develop colicky irritable behaviour, reflux, loose stools, eczema and/or nappy rashes.



## What chemicals you're sensitive to



This is very individual. Most people with food intolerance are sensitive to more than one substance. This can include natural food chemicals (eg. salicylates, amines, glutamate – page 9) as well as one or more of the common food additives (page 25).

### How sensitive you are

The more sensitive you are, the less you will be able to tolerate of the chemical-rich foods. Speed of onset and severity of reactions can vary too. Symptoms can begin within an hour or two, but more often take several hours to develop. Typical reactions last a few hours, but more severe ones can sometimes go on for several days.



### How much you eat

Depending on your 'threshold' for reacting, large doses may upset you whereas smaller amounts may have no immediate effect. However, small amounts of salicylates and/or amines from many different foods eaten regularly can build up in your system gradually. Chronic or recurrent symptoms can then develop without the cause being obvious.

