

FOOD INTOLERANCE & ALLERGY

Many people these days think they are intolerant to certain foods or allergic to them. The truth is that this is often not the case. Part of this rise is due to the marketing of Free From foods and the fact that in some ways it has become fashionable to say that we are intolerant/allergic to certain food groups.

The difference between an allergy and intolerance is that an allergy is an almost immediate reaction with anaphylaxis shock to say a peanut being at the extreme end. At the other end would be say your lip swelling after eating cherries.

Intolerances on the other hand are characterised by a delayed response which will normally be a few hours but in some rare cases can take for up to a week.

Various studies have shown that allergies only affect about 3% of the population whilst food intolerances can affect 40% of the population at some time in their life. Food allergens are normally pretty obvious and easy to identify for a skilled practitioner, therefore the majority of this article will focus on the more common food intolerances.

The most common food intolerance symptoms are

- Bloating
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Low energy
- Fluid retention
- Eczema
- Asthma
- Migraines

However, we rarely recommend food intolerance tests - we frequently find in our clinical practice that food intolerances are not the cause of the health problems, but in fact the symptom. Food intolerances can often arise because a person's digestive system has become compromised through poor diet, excess stress, infections, or antibiotic use.

Taking the above into account, food intolerance tests could effectively be renamed as gut integrity tests. Normally when someone has an intolerance this is due to the gut lining, having been eroded slightly due to poor diet & lifestyle choices. This lining is only a few cells thick and once eroded food particles cross this barrier into the blood stream where the immune system sees them as invaders and causes the symptoms as described above.

The reason food intolerance tests are generally avoided is that where the results indicate a food to avoid, this does not address the underlying cause and in time, the individual will become intolerant to more foods until the gut lining is healed using nutritional medicine.

