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11-30-2007

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Recommended Citation
"Elimination/Challenge Diet" (2007). *Jefferson Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine Protocols.* Paper 2.
http://jdc.jefferson.edu/jmbcim_protocols/2

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Elimination/Challenge Diet

There are several approaches to identifying food intolerance, and food influences on chronic symptoms and chronic disease. The following instructions describe the approach that we have found to be most helpful for improving patient symptoms and identifying the specific food or foods that may be problematic.

Information is provided in five sections. The first section describes the two levels of the Elimination Diet. These two levels are important because most people will see positive effects by following the first level. Those that do not see results or those who have tried elimination diets before should follow the second level, although your practitioner will discuss the options and recommend the appropriate level and procedure for you to follow. Section II describes how to prepare for the Elimination/Challenge Diet – following through on each suggestion will make the diet much easier to follow and improve your chances for success. Section III is "Starting the Elimination Diet." Finally, section IV describes the Challenge Phase of the program.

Although several references were used and input was provided by several Brind Center practitioners, the following two books were most helpful: (1) *Food Allergies*, by Neil S. Ornstein and Sarah L Bingham, 1987, Perigree Books; and (2) *Food Allergies and Food Intolerance*, by Jonathan Brostoff and Linda Gamlin, 2000, Healing Arts Press.

SECTION I: The Elimination Phase

Level 1: Restriction of Sugar, Dairy, Wheat, Alcohol and Caffeine (See Section II re: caffeine)

This level of the Elimination Diet will make most people feel much better, both physically and emotionally. While many foods are restricted on this diet, there are many more foods that can be eaten. The big difference is that this diet eliminates many refined and processed foods, while encouraging a natural, healthy and whole food diet. It is actually this diet that should be the foundation of everyone's diet, and from this foundation that individual diets are formulated.

Level 2: Comprehensive Elimination Diet

This level of the Elimination Diet is more restrictive but is important for identifying food intolerance in more complicated and/or chronic disease patients. All highly allergenic foods or commonly intolerant foods are restricted, beyond those listed in Level 1, including corn, peanuts, soy and other gluten grains (rye, barley, oats), eggs, citrus, yeast, and all fermented foods.

SECTION II: Preparation

Read the following suggestions carefully to insure that you understand the procedures and can effectively complete the outlined program. If there are any problems or questions, seek assistance from your practitioner and/or the Center staff.

One: Stock Up on Foods Included on the Elimination Diet

Before you begin eliminating foods from your diet, go shopping and stock up on the foods you will be allowed to eat. The foods you can eat during the seven to fourteen days of the Elimination Phase are:

VEGETABLES:

Low Carbohydrate		High Carbohydrate
Artichoke	Kale	Beets
Asparagus	Kohlrabi	Carrots
Avocado	Lettuce (leaf or head)	Parsnips
Bok Choy	Mustard Greens	Potatoes (white, sweet, or yams)
Broccoli	Okra	Pumpkin
Brussels Sprouts	Onions	Winter Squash
Cabbage	Peppers	
Cauliflower	Radish	
Celery	Rutabaga	
Chicory	Spinach	
Collards	Summer Squash	
Cucumbers	Swiss Chard	
Dandelion	Tomatoes	
Eggplant	Turnips	
Endive	Watercress	
Escarole		
Horseradish (fresh, no vinegar)		

LEGUMES	FRUIT	
Black-eyed Peas	Apples	Nectarines
Chick Peas	Apricots	Peaches
Kidney Beans	Bananas	Pears
Lentils	Blackberries	Persimmons
Lima Beans	Blueberries	Pineapple
Navy Beans	Cherries	Plums
Peas	Coconut	Prunes
Pinto Beans	Cranberries	Pomegranate
	Loganberries	Raspberries
	Melons (all, including cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon)	

FISH, POULTRY AND MEAT		
Bass	Chicken	Beef
Flounder	Duck	Lamb
Haddock	Game Birds	Pork
Monk Fish	Goose	Veal
Salmon	Pheasant	
Sardines	Quail	
Scrod	Turkey	
Sole		
Trout		
Tuna		

GRAINS
Amaranth
Basmati Rice
Brown Rice
Buckwheat (this is not wheat)
Millet
Quinoa

FLOUR
Amaranth Flour
Millet Flour
Potato Flour
Quinoa
Rice Flour

HERBS & SPICES
All, but fresh are preferable to dried because they are less likely to be moldy (thus containing yeast)

SWEETNERS
Brown Rice Syrup
Honey
Pure Maple Syrup

OIL
Canola
Olive
Safflower
Sesame
Safflower
Sunflower

NUTS & SEEDS
Nuts: Almonds, Brazil, Cashews, Filberts, Hazelnuts, Pecans, Walnuts (NO peanuts)
Seeds: Pumpkin, Sesame,

BEVERAGES
Fresh Vegetable Juice only
Herbal Tea (without any citrus)
Seltzer (plain or flavored)
Water (bottled or filtered)

Two: Prepare your Family and Friends

Before you begin the program, prepare your family and friends. Explain what you plan to do and ask for their support. If you have ever been on a reducing diet, you know how helpful it is to know that those near you support and encourage you.

It will also be easier for you if everyone in your household agrees to eat the foods prescribed on this diet when they eat at home. Not only does this show support, but it makes mealtime less of a cooking ordeal. And they may benefit as well!

Three: Reduce (or stop) Supplements and Caffeine

During the Elimination Phase, reduce to just key supplements, or eliminate all vitamin and mineral supplements that you are currently taking. Since many B complex vitamins have a yeast base, and most vitamin fillers contain a corn ingredient, vitamins and supplements may contain one or more of your problem foods. If you feel that you really cannot do without specific supplements, discuss this with your practitioner. Also, if you take many daily supplements, it is not good to stop all of them "cold turkey," so cut down on their use gradually over a five-to-ten-day period before you plan to begin the Elimination Phase. If you are currently taking only one or two supplements each day, you can stop them when you begin the diet program without any adverse effects.

If you are drinking more than 2 cups of coffee a day, it would be wise to reduce this by one cup a day, or every 2 days until you can stop. Immediately stopping a large caffeine intake (this includes large amounts of black tea or caffeinated soda) often brings about a splitting headache. To avoid this, slowly wean yourself from caffeine.

Four: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Before beginning the Elimination Phase, go through the list of foods that will be eliminated from your diet and put them away. Push perishables to the back of the bottom shelf in your refrigerator, or give them away. Box up and store away all the others. Remember the old saying: "Out of sight, out of mind."

Five: Record Present Symptoms

During the Elimination Phase, you will be watching to see if your symptoms lessen or cease. To assure yourself of accurate results, write down exactly how you feel during the week before you begin the program. See Section VI.

Six: Weigh and Record

On the day before you begin the Elimination Diet, weigh yourself and note your weight. You will also weigh and record your weight every day during the program. Because some people retain water and get bloated and puffy in reaction to a particular food, it is very common to lose up to six pounds of water in the first two or three days of the Elimination Phase. You will not be losing fat or burning extra calories; you will lose retained fluid. But many people do report that they lose that bloated feeling after they have been avoiding foods to which they are allergic or intolerant. So on the day before you plan to begin the program, record your weight.

As you enter the Challenge Phase of the program a weight gain (sometimes as much as two or three pounds overnight) almost always indicates that you have reintroduced a food to which you are allergic. It will be important to have a record of your weight fluctuations.

Seven: Set Your Goals

Most people work best when they have a goal to work toward. Think of something you've been wanting for a long time and promise it to yourself as a reward when you finish this program. Maybe you'd like some new clothes, a vacation, or a party. Whatever reward you choose, visualize yourself moving through the Elimination Diet Program well prepared, in good spirits, and ultimately attain your goal.

SECTION III: Starting the Elimination Diet

Days One Through Seven

Now it's time to completely stop eating the foods eliminated on this diet. For Level 1 stop eating all sugar, dairy, wheat, alcohol and caffeine (includes chocolate, coffee, tea, etc.). For Level 2 stop eating all of the foods listed below. You will follow this from Day 1 to Day 7. Don't ease into this phase by eliminating some foods on one day and more on the next. Eliminate them all from your diet right from the start. You should notice a drastic reduction or total cessation of symptoms within seven days. However, if there is no change in the way you feel after the first seven days on the Elimination Diet, you may be one of the few people whose body chemistry takes longer to recover from having eaten a problem food. If so, continue this phase for an additional seven days before beginning the Challenge Phase.

The key to successfully simplifying your diet is to recognize many components that make up a single food. As a result of ingredients being combined, many foods join the elimination list. Ketchup may seem fine because tomatoes are allowed, but it also contains the eliminated ingredient vinegar. White rice sounds OK, but it is usually enriched, which means that B vitamins have been added. Since they are often derived from yeast, it is out. Salad dressings, luncheon meats, soups, pastries, pickles, and sauerkraut are all forbidden because of their other ingredients. From this short list of examples, you can see the importance of considering the components that make up the foods you eat during the Elimination Phase. As a general rule, all processed and packaged foods should be avoided because they almost always contain something that is eliminated on this diet. Therefore, it is easiest during this period of simplification to use single, fresh ingredients.

Another way to make sure you're not eating things that should be eliminated is to read all food ingredient labels. You will be most successful during this phase if you do not eat anything unless you know what it is made of. Sometimes, labels list ingredients by their chemical or by-product names. Words that mean "sugar," for example, end in *-ose*, such as glucose, sucrose, fructose, or dextrose. They're included on the list of eliminated foods.

We have also included a list of "forbidden" foods, but it is impossible to include every item available in every food category. So remember: read all labels carefully!

At this point, you should have your shelves stocked with the foods that are allowed in this diet, and now it's time to eliminate the following foods. Again, Level 1 only restricts sugar, dairy, wheat, alcohol and caffeine; whereas Level 2 restricts all of the following food categories.

CITRUS

Grapefruit
Lemons
Limes
Oranges
Citrus Beverages

CHOCOLATE AND COLA

Cakes
Candies
Chocolate Cereals
Chocolate and Cola Drinks
Frosting
Pastries
Pies

COFFEE, TEA AND ALCOHOL

Eliminate all coffee and tea (regular and decaffeinated), and alcohol, including beer and wine. Remember to reduce coffee intake slowly (before beginning the Elimination Diet).

CORN AND FOODS THAT CONTAIN CORN PRODUCTS

Bacon
Candies
Corn Batters
Corn Breads
Corn Chips
Corn Flakes
Corn containing Cereals
Corn Muffins
Corn Starches
Corn Syrup
Dextrin
Dextrose
Envelope and Stamp Adhesive
Fresh and Frozen Corn
Fructose
Hominy Grits
Ketchup
Maize
Mazola Oil
Mixed Vegetable Oil
Modified Food Starch
Peanut Butter with Corn Syrup
Popcorn
Toothpaste
Tortillas
Zein

DAIRY PRODUCTS AND FOODS THAT MAY CONTAIN DAIRY INGREDIENTS

* Read labels for milk-derived ingredients such as casein, lactalbumin, and whey.

Butter
Biscuits
Ice Cream
Luncheon Meats

Cookies
Cottage Cheese
Crackers
Cream Soups
Doughnuts
Milk (whole, skim, evaporated, goat's, condensed, instant nonfat dry)
Pastries
Yogurt

EGGS AND FOODS THAT CONTAIN EGG PRODUCTS

Bread
Cakes (including all cake mixes)
Cookies
Custard
Eggs in any form (poached, scrambled, baked, fried, creamed, deviled, hard or soft boiled)
Egg Salads
Egg Sauces
Ice Cream
Mayonnaise
Meringues
Noodles
Omelets
Pasta
Prepared mixes and frozen dinners
Salad Dressings
Soufflés
Read labels for the egg derived ingredient Albumin

SUGAR

Eliminate all sugar and sugar products (including brown sugar). The list of foods that contain sugar is far too extensive to print. Avoid all the obvious sugar foods such as candy, cake, and soft drinks. Read labels for words that end in *–ose*, such as glucose, fructose, dextrose, and high fructose corn syrup.

VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Taper off your use of supplements (if taking high amounts) in a 5-10 day period before beginning the Elimination Diet.

WHEAT AND FOODS THAT CONTAIN WHEAT PRODUCTS

Biscuits
Bran
Breads (wheat, white, rye, pumpernickel)
Bulgur
Commercial Gravy
Cookies
Couscous
Crackers
Doughnuts
Meats containing fillers (meat loaf, wieners, bologna, luncheon meats)
Muffins
Noodles
Pancakes
Pastries
Prepared batters and mixes
Rolls
Semolina

WHEAT AND FOODS THAT CONTAIN WHEAT PRODUCTS (continued)

Farina
Flour (wheat, graham, white, high gluten, enriched, unbleached)
French Toast
Matzos
Soups (with noodles, dumplings, or thickened with wheat flour)
Soy Sauce
Tabouli
Wheat Cereals
Wheat Germ

YEAST AND FOODS WHICH MAY CONTAIN YEAST

Baker's Yeast
Brewer's Yeast
Condiments that contain vinegar (mustard, ketchup, relish, horseradish, pickles, mayonnaise)
Dried Fruits
Fermented Foods (Miso soup, soy sauce)
Grapes
Nutritional Yeast
Peanuts
Sauerkraut
Vinegar

ARTIFICIAL COLORINGS

Yellow dye no. 5 (tartrazine) is especially problematic.

Butterscotch Chips
Cake Mixes
Candy drops and Hard Candies
Certain Breakfast Cereals
Certain Candy Coatings
Certain Instant and Regular Puddings
Colored Marshmallows
Chocolate Chips
Commercial Frosting
Commercial Gingerbread
Commercial Pies
Flavored Carbonate Beverages
Ready-to-eat Canned Puddings
Refrigerated Rolls and Quick Breads

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

Aspartame
NutraSweet
Saccharine

ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

Sodium Benzoate (Benzoic Acid)
BHA
BHT

ARTIFICIAL FLAVORINGS

Eliminate ALL artificial flavorings

SEASONINGS

Don't pick up anything and shake it on your food until you read the label.

That's the entire list! Once you've decided to eliminate these foods from your diet, stick with it. While you're in the Elimination Phase, you must be very strict about avoiding these foods because it simply won't work if you say to yourself, "Oh, a little bit won't make a difference." The tiniest morsel certainly **will** make a difference – it could compromise the whole program.

It's not really difficult to get by without these foods for such a short period of time, especially when there are others you can substitute in their place.

SECTION IV: The Challenge Phase

Days Eight Through Twenty-Five

It is time to reintroduce to your diet the foods that were eliminated during the Elimination Phase, and watch to see which ones cause an allergic reaction. This part of the program is called the Challenge Phase because you are challenging your system to react to commonly problematic foods. If there is no adverse reaction, your body has met the challenge and has proven it can handle the reintroduced food. If there is an adverse reaction however, you have identified one of your problem foods.

If you do have a reaction to one of the foods during this phase, do not continue eating that food or reintroducing any additional foods until the symptoms totally cease. For example, if you reintroduce corn and citrus with no problems, and then reintroduce eggs and have a reaction, stop eating eggs and egg products for however long it takes to become non-reactive. The period for this to occur varies. It can be as short as one day or as long as a week to ten days, depending on your system. Don't worry about it though. You have discovered one of your problem foods; that's the goal of this phase. Continue eating all the foods that you were allowed on the Elimination Diet, as well as the foods that were reintroduced without a reaction, until you feel well again. Then reintroduce the next food on the list, completely eliminating the food group that caused your reaction. If your symptoms do not recur upon the reintroduction of a particular food during the two days, you can simply continue eating that food in regular-size servings (preferably not every day) and go on to the next group on the list. Since you have been able to eat successfully large quantities of a given food for two days in a row without any reaction, you can safely assume you are not allergic or intolerant to it.

Before you begin this phase, remember to:

- Read through the list of food suggestions in advance and stock up
- Continue to read food labels. During this phase it is still best to stay away from processed and packaged foods because they usually contain a combination of many ingredients. Do not reintroduce any food that contains a problem ingredient that has not yet been reintroduced
- Introduce only one food group at a time
- Continue eating the foods allowed during the Elimination Phase
- Record each day's food, symptom information and weight in your food diary

The following food groups are to be reintroduced in the order in which they are listed. The suggested food and menu ideas are not mandatory; they are only included as a guide to help you. An asterisk (*) after an item indicates that a recipe for it is found in Section V.

Reintroduce the food groups in this order:

1. Corn
2. Citrus
3. Eggs
4. Yeast-free Wheat
5. Yeasted Wheat
6. Non-aged or "Yeast-free" Dairy Products
7. Aged or "Yeasted" Dairy Products
8. Sugar
9. Coffee, tea