

Wheat, Sugar, Cow's Milk, Eggs, Corn, Soy, Peanuts — the seven most common food reactions, mainly due to the persistent intake of these foods in the diet and as the base of most processed foods.

Food reactions are quite common and often result from digestive dysfunction. There are many factors that cause the breakdown in optimal function of the gastrointestinal tract. Overeating, too many foods combined at once, incomplete chewing, drinking too much while eating (which dilutes the digestive juices), and chronic stress all weaken our ability to digest foods thoroughly. Furthermore, many people have an imbalance of intestinal flora, where they have killed off their healthy bacteria from overuse of antibiotics, which is common in modern medicine. Other irritating bacteria may flourish; fermenting types of yeast organisms or parasites will take up residence within our intestines. These cause an irritation of the membranes, and this affects our proper absorption of nutrients, causing abnormal absorption of larger molecules, often referred to as "leaky gut" syndrome. Allowing toxins to enter the blood stream can affect our brain function, mood, and energy level, and cause secondary immune and biochemical reactions to these toxins. Our digestive tract has the highest amount of immune activity of any area in the human body.

Testing is available from naturally oriented physicians as well as some chiropractors and acupuncturists who have studied gastrointestinal function, nutritional medicine, and ecology. Most standard medical doctors haven't gone to this level of health knowledge to be able to help in these more subtle and preventative (not-yet-diseased) states.

Healing the gastrointestinal tract is paramount to regaining our overall health. Dr. Haas discusses his program for re-establishing digestive health in his book, *The New Detox Diet*.

The Program: The Six R's

- **REBALANCE** your diet and your lifestyle. In other words, you may need to eat differently and live more healthfully, even thinking in a more positive way. Your digestion is so sensitive to your stresses and emotions.
- **REMOVE** any offending organisms. This can be done with herbal medicines or pharmaceuticals. Abnormal yeasts and parasites are quite common in these modern times.
- **REPLACE** any needed digestive enzymes or hydrochloric acid (low stomach acid, leading to improper protein digestion, is quite common and undermines health).
- **REINOCULATE** the right bacteria, such as lactobacilli and bifidobacteria, to create the best environment for your digestive tract.
- **REPAIR** by providing all the right nutrients to help heal damaged membranes and allow optimal function again. The amino acid L-glutamine is helpful, as are the B-vitamins, vitamins C, A, and E, zinc, plus many others.

Food reactions are generated through multiple systems in our body — digestive, immune, biochemical, and hormonal — causing bloating and swelling in the body and gut, plus many other possible problems. These reactions, caused by an allergic or depleted system, make us more sensitive to environmental toxins. Allowing these reactions to quiet and clear can help those suffering from them to feel much better rather quickly. Following an elimination diet — avoiding our habitual or commonly eaten foods as well as the most reactive foods — is part of this Purification Process.

Challenging the foods

After a week or two of avoidance (once you get started and get through the fear, you'll be clear), you can challenge yourself by eating one of these foods, giving it a while to check your experience of any untoward effects. Usually I have my patients watch three different time periods for these food reactions, since many responses can be delayed:

- First, watch immediately and over the first hour after eating the food.
- Also pay attention to later in the day, several hours up to six hours later.
- Then, observe how you are when you wake up the next morning. Do you feel a little foggy or have a hangover?

If you had any reaction to the food or substance — if you feel worse (fatigue, irritability, itchy skin, digestive upset, and mood or energy changes are some possible reactions) or have any of the symptoms you had previously experienced — you are likely reactive to that food.

Beginning the Purification Process

How do you begin? First, take an honest self-assessment. What are you hooked into? What are your habits and abuses? How ready are you to take a break from them? Then, set up a plan, in writing, stating what you will do, for how long, and what you wish to achieve. Use a program you know or can read about clearly, such as the Detox Diet or a juice cleanse. It helps if someone you know and trust has done it. It's also great if you can find a friend or family member to do it with, to help each other get through any hard times and to have someone with whom you can share your success.

The benefits of detoxification

Some of the benefits of detoxification are an improvement in mental clarity, physical well-being, and spiritual energy, as well as the lessening of many symptoms. And if any of the following problems are relevant, you can lower your body weight, your blood pressure, and your cholesterol level, and likely use less medication. Many people claim they feel "better than they have in years."

In truth, what Dr. Haas attempts to do in his writing and practice is to place your health and that of your family back into your own hands, because so much of it is up to you. Be your own best doctor. It really matters how you live — what you do and what you eat, and what you think and feel. Take hold of yourself and your habits, and do what you can to be vital and healthy. Use the latest range and the oldest sage — the Purification Process — to improve your health. It is really worth it.

Be well.

Success Story

"I really enjoyed doing the cleanse again. It kick-started me back to health, which is exactly what I needed! I am having no sugar cravings and my psoriasis is under control. With such great results, I plan on continuing to eat on this regimen as much as possible."

— C. Nielsen

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