

# Comprehensive Guide for the IFM ELIMINATION DIET

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## WHY THE ELIMINATION DIET?

Do you suffer from any of the following:

- Digestive problems
- Headaches
- Chronic sinus drainage
- Low energy
- Depression
- Mood swings
- Eczema
- Skin irritations
- Joint aches
- Asthma
- Difficulty losing weight



Do you eat the same foods *every* day?

Your health problems may be related to a specific food or foods you eat frequently. Many people with food sensitivities don't even realize how awful they feel until the "trigger" foods are removed from the diet.

Food reactions are a frequently overlooked cause of chronic health issues. Some reactions occur immediately after eating the food (called "food allergy"), but in other cases, symptoms may be delayed by several hours or even days (referred to as "food sensitivity" or "food intolerance"). Removing specific foods from your diet will allow your body to recover and begin to function efficiently again.

These adverse food reactions are so common because most of us eat the same foods day after day, which can result in our bodies becoming sensitized to these foods. If we don't eat the right foods for our body, we may experience poor digestion and absorption because of the changes we have made to our gut microflora by eating these foods. Additionally, you may also be more prone to food sensitivities if you have a weakened immune system.

The Elimination Diet helps you to uncover what foods may be the culprits. It is useful in diagnosing adverse food reactions, whether true allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity.

Often, symptoms that have failed to respond to conventional medical therapy will resolve by following an elimination diet. After the initial period of eliminating foods, many of your chronic symptoms should improve or disappear. When you decrease the burden on your immune system, your body will have an opportunity to heal.

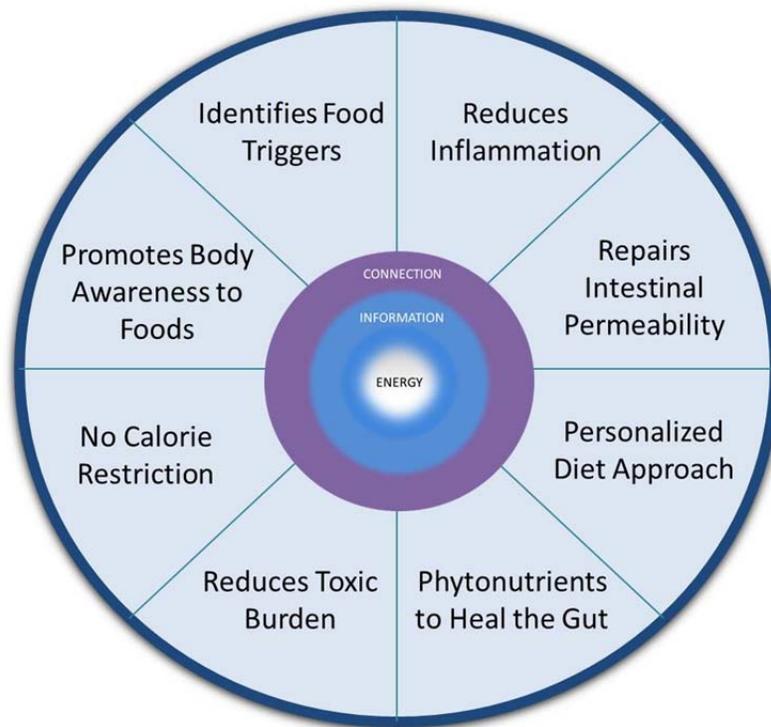
Along the way, you will also learn how to eat an enjoyable and nutrient-dense diet while starting on the road to optimum health!

## FEATURES OF THE ELIMINATION DIET

- **Identifies food triggers:** The Elimination Diet guides you to include and exclude certain foods. Those that are avoided are generally foods eaten often, even several times daily, such as wheat/gluten grains, dairy, refined and artificial sweeteners, corn, beef, pork, eggs, soy, and other foods. Corn and soy are commonly added to many processed foods. We are often not aware of the extent of these foods in our diets. Fast foods and other highly processed prepared foods contain a variety of pro-inflammatory chemicals that add to the toxic burden on the liver and are also avoided.
- **Promotes body awareness to foods:** At the end of the period your healthcare practitioner recommends you to be on the Elimination Diet, foods are 'challenged' to identify problem foods. During this time, you may develop an increasing awareness of foods that trigger symptoms in your body. This is the time when you will have the opportunity to figure out what food is making you feel so poorly. Being on the Elimination Diet for even a few weeks can lead to changes in your taste buds and a greater level of sensitivity about what foods cause changes in your body. Symptoms that are currently a problem are likely to improve during the Elimination Diet, although there is often an initial period of worsening. As the avoided foods are carefully brought back into your eating, you can see what foods may trigger symptoms experienced prior to the Elimination Diet. Overall, you'll notice that you will be much more in touch with your body's responses to foods after the Elimination Diet.
- **Results in a personalized approach to food:** At the end of the Elimination Diet and all the reintroductions of foods, you will have a much better sense of what you need to be eating more regularly. You may find that you will have to continue to refrain from eating certain foods, but that other foods you had eliminated can be safely brought back into your everyday diet. You may need to revisit the Elimination Diet again in years to come, once your digestive and immune systems have changed, to see whether you need to tweak what you are eating.
- **Reduces inflammation:** Food reactions (of any type) can trigger low-grade inflammatory reactions in the gut, making the intestinal wall more porous and exposed to the influx of large, undigested food particles into the blood (a condition referred to as "leaky gut"). This cascade could lead to other problems including bacteria, chemicals, and yeast from your intestine stimulating the immune system, causing more inflammation. Just as food reactions can lead to leaky gut, the reverse is also true that leaky gut can significantly affect the development of food sensitivities. The Elimination Diet also helps to reduce inflammation by promoting the ingestion of foods that encourage the intake of anti-inflammatory foods.
- **Supports gut repair:** Much of one's health is determined by the state of the gut. Clustered around the digestive tract is more than 70% of the immune system. When inflammation is decreased by eliminating certain foods, you will be better able to heal the gut, and, ultimately, the immune system. Additionally, the gut tissue can be rebuilt with healthy whole foods, high in protein and phytonutrients that are on the Elimination Diet.

- **Provides healing phytonutrients for the gut:** The Elimination Diet contains a broad variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. These whole foods provide a complex array of compounds to promote healing, and allow your cells to function better.
- **Reduces toxins:** Our food supply has become compromised due to the addition of artificial colorings, flavorings, additives, and preservatives, not to mention the pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides that come along with conventionally-grown produce, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Perhaps one of the biggest nutritional burdens in our society is the amount of sweeteners in the highly processed prepared foods. Eating a “cleaner” diet by removing problem foods can help to increase the liver’s ability to eliminate toxins. In addition to removing potentially reactive foods that may be toxic, the Elimination Diet promotes the consumption of organic foods to lower the toxic burden in the body. Grass-fed and free-range sources of animal protein, higher in omega-3 fatty acids than their corn-fed and caged counterparts, are also encouraged.
- **Doesn’t restrict calories:** Weight loss is not a goal of this food plan, but may (or may not) happen due to your body coming back into balance. As a result, calorie control and ingestion of specific food groups are optional, so in that way, it is not as restrictive as some dietary regimens. However, what is essential is to eat only the foods on the food list. Over many years of using this approach, functional medicine practitioners have found the Elimination Diet to be well-tolerated and quite beneficial.

### FEATURES OF THE ELIMINATION DIET



## TOURING YOU THROUGH THE FOOD PLAN

The one-page Elimination Diet Food Plan is designed to give you a “snapshot” of the foods that would be suggested to choose from every day. A general description of the food categories will be helpful as you start the process of avoiding foods that are potentially causing problems for you.

Overall, these are the foods and food categories that will be omitted:

- Corn
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Gluten Grains (Barley, Rye, Spelt, Wheat)
- White (Table) Sugar
- Shellfish
- Soy
- Beef
- Pork
- Processed Meats
- Coffee, Tea, and Chocolate

*Keep in mind that the foods we crave the most may be the ones we are most sensitive to in our diet!*

These are the foods and food categories that will be emphasized:

- Fruits
- Healthy Oils
- Lean Meats
- Legumes
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Vegetables
- Non-Gluten Whole Grains

### Fats & Oils

You will find a vast selection of fats and oils that can be used for salad dressings (cold preparation) and cooking (warm to hot preparation). We prefer that you choose minimally refined, cold-pressed, organic, non-GMO fats and liquid oils whenever possible as these will be the best quality. Remember that fats and liquid oils break down in heat, light, and oxygen so the quality of these oils is imperative. They are only as good to use as is their quality and stability. Keep oils in dark glass containers and throw them out if they smell rancid. You’ll note that canned coconut milk is included in this category because it is predominantly a fat (not a dairy alternative) when purchased in the can.

### Nuts & Seeds

The nuts and seeds category will give you a variety of options to choose from if you need a snack throughout the day, or would like to sprinkle them on top of salads, cereals, or vegetables. With the compelling data that supports the inclusion of a handful of nuts in the diet each day, we suggest that you try at least one to two servings of nuts on a daily basis. Aim for a mixed blend of raw unsalted nuts

(not peanuts) that are not roasted in oil. You can select unsalted nuts and seeds in the bulk section of your grocery store and put together your own concoction at home. A variety of nuts are helpful, as this provides you different phytonutrients from a larger array of nuts. You might try adding hemp seeds or flax meal to a salad or a smoothie; and don't forget about the ease of using nut butters like tahini (sesame seed butter) drizzled over vegetables, almond butter on an apple slice, or cashew nut butter on a sliver of pear.

## **Protein**

Protein helps stabilize your blood sugar, which in turn keeps your hunger at bay. When possible, include some protein in every meal. There are many different sources of protein to choose from whether you are vegetarian or omnivore. Vegetarians have a list of legumes to choose from (see below), while omnivores may have animal proteins such as poultry, lamb, wild game, and fish (not shellfish). Similar to other food categories, quality is of utmost importance. High-quality proteins of any kind are the best choice, including lean, grass-fed, organic, non-GMO sources.

## **Legumes**

Legumes are a perfect way to get quality protein and complex carbohydrate, which will help you feel full and stabilize your blood sugar. It is recommended that you eat at least one serving of legumes on a daily basis in the form of soup, cooked beans, dips, or hummus. Legumes make a wonderful complement to brown rice or quinoa or a non-starchy vegetable. Try black beans in soup, garbanzo beans (also called chick peas) or kidney beans added to your salad, or make a salad with two or three different beans with chopped onion and pepper.

## **Non-Starchy and Starchy Vegetables**

Vegetables pack the extra punch for providing necessary phytonutrients for the detoxification that occurs on the Elimination Diet. We encourage you to try some of these vegetables that you may not have tried before, and to aim for a minimum of five servings every day. Ideally, it would be best if you could get 10-12 servings per day. A serving is only ½ cup cooked vegetable or 1 cup raw leafy greens. In fact, it is possible that you could get more than five servings in one meal if you are filling your plate with vegetables or eating a hearty salad.

Green vegetables are particularly nutritious for those on the Elimination Diet, especially members of the cabbage family: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, green and red cabbage, kale, collard greens, and bok choy, broccoli rabe, cauliflower, turnip, turnip and mustard greens, arugula, watercress, tatsoi, mizuna, kohlrabi, radish, and daikon.

You will want to eat a "rainbow of colors" in addition to greens: red beets, peppers, radishes, red peppers; orange carrots, yams, sweet potatoes, orange peppers and winter squash; yellow summer squash, yellow peppers, and white onions and garlic.

The best way to eat lots of vegetables daily is to include them in at least two meals. Try having some leftover broccoli or stir fried vegetables with your morning meal, or have hearty vegetable soup or

leftover salad for lunch with several servings of both raw and cooked vegetables (also including fruit and be sure to add olive oil, avocado, or nuts to your salad). Include a small dinner salad plus more cooked vegetables with dinner. Choose seasonal ingredients. For example, try a cabbage salad in the winter, when cabbage is abundant.

If you choose to make a juice from these vegetables, use a blender that keeps the fiber and particulates rather than just squeezing out the sugary juice. If you buy pre-made tomato juice, make sure it doesn't contain added sugar (read the ingredient label).

Please note the red caution box on this section of the food list. There are select compounds in certain vegetables (and fruits) that may cause reactions in sensitive individuals. These compounds are called histamines, oxalates, and salicylates. Additionally, your healthcare practitioner may choose to have you avoid a class of plant foods called nightshades if they believe these foods might be causing you symptoms.

### **Histamines**

Histamine is a key mediator in inflammation. It occurs naturally in many foods and is also produced by the body during times of stress and allergy. Histamine is made and stored in mast cells and is released during allergen exposure, causing dilation of blood vessels, increased mucus production, and bronchoconstriction. The release of histamine results in various symptoms such as itching, sneezing, asthma, headache, and rash. Additionally, certain foods and food additives prompt the release of histamine from mast cells.

Other than the histamine release that occurs during times of stress or allergy, exposure to histamine occurs in the following ways:

- Foods to avoid on a low-histamine diet: bananas, chocolate, strawberries, tomatoes, egg whites, pork, sauerkraut, cheeses, fermented soy products, sausage, spinach, ketchup, eggplant, alcoholic beverages, smoked meats, vinegars, and (canned) fish, along with certain food additives and preservatives such as tartrazine and other food colors, benzoates, BHA, and BHT.
- The histamine content in foods markedly varies according to storage and maturation; protein foods that may normally be low in histamine, will actually have increasing amounts of histamine as they age (e.g. leftover beef) or ripen (a green tomato vs. a ripe tomato). Leftover foods, especially those containing protein, should be frozen immediately. It is generally advisable to eat only food that has recently been prepared.

### **Oxalates**

Oxalates are found throughout nature in plants, animals, and in humans. Please note that the leaves of a plant typically contain higher oxalate levels than the roots, stems, and stalks.

High oxalate-containing foods: blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, currants, kiwifruit, concord (purple) grapes, figs, tangerines, plums, spinach, Swiss chard, beet greens, collards, okra,

parsley, leeks, quinoa, celery, green beans, rutabagas, summer squash, almonds, cashews, peanuts, soybeans, tofu, soy products, wheat bran, wheat germ, cocoa, chocolate, and black tea.

## **Salicylates**

Salicylates are chemicals that occur naturally in many plants. The bark, leaves, roots, and seeds of certain plants store salicylates, preventing them from rotting and protecting them against harmful insects, bacteria, and fungi. Many common foods, such as citrus fruits and berries, certain vegetables, herbs, spices, tea, and flavor additives contain salicylates. Chemically related to aspirin, salicylates may also be created synthetically and can be found in many drugs other than aspirin: analgesics, muscle relaxants, cough mixtures, antacids, cold and flu medication, and acne lotions. Certain perfumes, pesticides, and preservatives also contain salicylates.

Most fruits contain significant amounts of salicylates, with raisins, prunes, and berries containing the highest amounts. Dried fruits and processed fruits and vegetables usually contain a higher amount of salicylates than their fresh counterparts.

In addition to specific foods that contain large amounts of salicylates (see chart below), there are additional issues to consider. The highest amounts of salicylates are found in:

- Unripened fruit (salicylate content decreases as fruit ripens)
- Unpeeled fruits and vegetables (salicylates are concentrated just under the skin)
- Raw foods, juices, and dried foods
- Products containing additives such as sweeteners, toothpaste, food colorings and flavorings, and chewing gum
- Outer leaves of leafy vegetables
- Many spices and herbs contain considerable amounts of salicylates. Common spices and herbs that contain the highest amounts include the following: cayenne, cinnamon, cumin, dill, curry powder paprika, thyme, oregano, rosemary, and turmeric.

## **Dairy Alternatives**

There are several dairy-alternatives on this food plan, mostly in the form of nut milks. If you are buying dairy substitutes like coconut (boxed variety), almond, hemp, oat, or rice milk, you'll want to read the label carefully to ensure you are not getting sweeteners added to the blend. Note that you may see sweeteners such as "brown rice syrup" and "evaporated cane juice" in these products.

## **Fruits**

Fruits are helpful when you are feeling the need for something sweet, especially when you are used to eating desserts and other sweets. It's always better to couple fruit with a little bit of protein to offset any blood sugar spikes.

## **Gluten-Free Grains**

Gluten-free (GF) whole grains, or those with an intact bran outer coat, are important essentials for those on the Elimination Diet, as they provide an excellent source of fiber and other phytonutrients to assist with detoxification. You may be surprised to see oats on the GF list, as they were formerly thought to contain gluten. The only gluten issue concerning oats, and perhaps even other non-gluten grains, is one of cross-contamination when wheat is growing nearby, or if wheat, rye, or barley is processed on the same machinery. When purchasing oats, look for “certified gluten-free” on the label. If you have celiac disease, it will be very important to ensure that gluten has been omitted entirely from your daily eating. Your healthcare practitioner may advise you to limit the amount of carbohydrates from this grain category.

## Sweeteners to use

- **What to Use:** Certain sweeteners, in very small amounts, are acceptable - brown rice syrup, blackstrap molasses, pure maple syrup, raw honey, coconut sugar, agave nectar, lo han, erythritol, and stevia. Please have no more than three teaspoons daily of all sweeteners combined. Note that stevia is a high-intensity sweetener that requires no more than a pinch for maximum sweetness.
- **What Not to Use:** Table sugar and other highly processed sweeteners such as brown sugar lead to inflammation because they cause a dramatic surge in blood sugar, so are not advised on this program. Artificial sweeteners are not acceptable under any circumstances. Many sweeteners like high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) and corn syrup are derived from corn, which is eliminated on this program. Overall, high intensity sweeteners perpetuate a need for sweet-tasting food and make it difficult for you to enjoy the natural sweetness in all fruits and certain vegetables.

## A Note about Chocolate

While cocoa has redeeming qualities for certain health characteristics, all cocoa-related products like hot cocoa and chocolate are typically not allowed on the Elimination Diet due to the caffeine content. Talk with your healthcare practitioner about whether cocoa is an appropriate food item for you during this diet.

## What to Drink on the Elimination Diet

- **Water:** It is important to drink an adequate amount of water every day. Carbonated mineral water is also allowed. Approximately six to eight 8 oz. glasses daily are suggested.
- **Tea:** There are many flavors of herbal tea that are acceptable. Talk to your healthcare practitioner to give you guidance on whether you are allowed to have decaffeinated green and/or black teas.
- **Coffee:** Regular and decaf coffee are not allowed on the elimination diet. Coffee, while not high on the list of potential allergic foods, can have a significant effect on blood sugar and stress hormones. If you've eliminated coffee before, you might remember some headaches for a few days. It may be easier for you to slowly lower caffeine intake over several days to minimize the headaches and fatigue or unpleasant withdrawal symptoms that are often associated with caffeine withdrawal.
- **Alcohol:** All alcoholic beverages are omitted from the Elimination Diet.
- **Soft Drinks:** Both artificially-sweetened and regular soft drinks should be eliminated for the duration of the Elimination Diet. Try substituting seltzer water mixed with some juice or a squeeze of lemon or lime. You may also want to try coconut water, which is very refreshing and can be bought in most mainstream grocery stores.



- **Non-Dairy Beverages for Tea or Cereal:** It is important to avoid “non-dairy creamer” as it contains refined sugars, along with unhealthy hydrogenated fats. Instead, you may use one of the non-dairy milk substitutes such as almond or coconut milk to add to tea or use in gluten-free cereal. See the food list for other ideas. While it is best to use unsweetened dairy substitutes, brown rice syrup is an acceptable sweetener used in some of these alternative milks. All are available in the boxed variety. Beware of added ‘evaporated cane juice’ as this is also a common sweetener used that is not allowed on this program.

### Food Substitutions

When you want this...	...eat this (*refers to a recipe to be provided in another handout)
Milk (for cereal or shakes), yogurt, cheese	Milk substitutes: unsweetened rice, oat, hemp, almond*, sunflower, hazelnut, and coconut milk; Unsweetened coconut yogurt or kefir (read labels for lactose/casein-free)
Hot cereal, such as Wheatena or other hot cereal	Oatmeal or steel-cut oats, rice cereal, or quinoa flakes, Apple Cinnamon Amaranth Porridge*
Cold cereal	Puffed rice and millet, crispy brown rice, amaranth cereals; all labeled gluten-free (note that there tends to be corn in foods labeled gluten-free)
Bread, crackers, & pasta	Gluten-free breads, crackers, or pasta made with brown rice, oats, teff, millet, quinoa, amaranth, tapioca, buckwheat, sorghum, and potato flour or garbanzo bean flour; cellophane noodles from bean threads; (check labels for gluten-free with acceptable sweeteners)
Quick breads	Chia seed Applesauce bread*, Pumpkin Oatmeal Pancakes*
Breading	Grind any allowable rice crackers or bread, or use almond meal (any nut meal), ground chia seeds or coconut, or coconut flour
Eggs	Store-bought “egg-replacer,” or blend 1 Tbsp. flax meal or chia seeds in blender with ¼ cup water and allow to thicken for a few minutes
Peanut butter	Nut butters made from almond, cashew, macadamia, walnut, hazelnut, or pumpkin and sesame seeds (tahini)
Ice cream	Various brands of rice or coconut-based frozen desserts (read labels carefully for approved sweeteners)
Soft drinks	Sparkling or mineral water mixed with a squeeze of lemon or lime, or with a small amount of your favorite juice (¾ water, ¼ juice); filtered or purified water with slices of lemon or lime; unsweetened coconut water
Coffee/tea	Herbal teas
Butter or margarine	Coconut oil or butter
Sugar & sweeteners	Unsweetened apple butter, brown rice syrup, blackstrap molasses, pure maple syrup, raw honey, coconut sugar, agave nectar, lo han, erythritol, and stevia.
Condiments	All types of vinegar, all spices, including salt, pepper, basil, carob, cinnamon, cumin, dill, garlic, ginger, mustard, oregano, parsley, rosemary, tarragon, thyme, turmeric, etc.

## GETTING STARTED



### **It's worth the effort!**

Some dietary changes present more of a challenge than others and it is important to keep in mind that feeling healthy is worth the effort. If you get discouraged at any point, keep the end result in mind. The first few days are the hardest, particularly if you are having symptoms of withdrawal from the foods you are used to eating several times daily (breads, desserts, milk products, processed and sweetened fast foods, pasta, etc.). Be sure to shop ahead (using the attached shopping

list), and be prepared for quick meals or snacks when necessary. This dietary program may initially require more time and energy than you typically spend preparing foods for each meal. It is worth your time – and remember that it is temporary. Most people feel so good using this way of eating that they often want to continue to eat this way!

### **How long will it last?**

Your healthcare practitioner will determine how long you will be on the Elimination Diet. But, typically, the Elimination Diet is followed for a three week period of time. Shorter time periods than three weeks may not yield the same results, as your body needs time to rid or clear the reactivity of the foods that are triggers of your symptoms. Initially, your current symptoms may worsen for a short time, rarely more than a few days, due to a 'withdrawal' from the foods you are used to eating. During this time, you may experience other transient reactions (usually in the first four to seven days), as your body adjusts to eating different foods. These reactions include changes in sleep patterns, fatigue, lightheadedness, headaches, joint or muscle stiffness, and gastrointestinal complaints. Such symptoms rarely last for more than a few days and will vary depending on the person and their body and lifestyle factors.

### **What foods do I eat?**

It is necessary to eat ONLY the foods that are on the food list. If you do not see a food on this list, then do not eat it. By the end of the prescribed period of the Elimination Diet, it is common to note improvements in many symptoms. We often hear people report increased energy and mental alertness, decreased headaches, decreased muscle or joint pain, decreased GI symptoms, and a general sense of improved well-being.

### **What about snacking and eating out?**

You may be used to snacking on whatever is available at work or at home. When following the Elimination Diet, you will want to be sure to have only the acceptable foods around for when you are hungry and your meal is not ready to eat. Have snacks and salad dressings at work for a quick snack or lunch salad. Eating out is generally not recommended since you will not be aware of all that is in the food served. Traveling is also best avoided during this time for the same reasons. It can be quite challenging to eat while on the road or in an airport. If you must travel, or visit with friends, then it might be helpful to bring your own food.

## HELPFUL HINTS

- **Plan from the start:** Before you start the Elimination Diet, make sure you have everything you need to eat within reach. Planning ahead and strategizing will greatly improve your chances of having successful results. Shop on your days off, and always carry food in your purse or car (fruit and nuts are the perfect portable snack). If you inadvertently eat a “forbidden” food, your results will not be as accurate or clear. Be as strict as possible and keep the end result in mind. Choose a period of time with the least amount of travel, parties, or stress that might sabotage your commitment.
- **Don’t go hungry!** Be sure to eat enough food to avoid hunger when there is no food available. If you have a question about a particular food, check to see if it is on the food list. In addition, avoid any foods to which you know you are sensitive or allergic, even if included on the “Food List.”
- **Use the tools provided:** You will have many tips and tools at your fingertips. The 7-day menu can be used as it is or you can change it to incorporate your favorite foods, provided they’re on the Food List your healthcare practitioner will provide to you.
- **Eat the rainbow!** Eat a salad daily and a minimum of four vegetables in a variety of colors. Be adventurous enough to try some new ones, such as acorn squash instead of carrots; kale or collards instead of spinach; or fresh roasted beets instead of potatoes. Or, add thinly sliced red cabbage or radicchio to your salad for a dash of red-purple phytonutrients!
- **Read all ingredient labels.** Check the “Hidden Foods” list for various items that contain foods on the “avoid” list. Here are some examples:
  - Corn, found in corn syrup or HFCS (drinks, processed food), corn starch (baking powder, processed foods), and amaranth and millet flake cereals which often contain corn.
  - Vinegar in ketchup, mayonnaise, and mustard is usually from wheat or corn.
  - Breads advertised as wheat-free, that are not gluten-free because they contain spelt, kamut, or rye.
  - Canned tuna may contain textured vegetable protein (a source of soy); low-salt versions tend to be pure tuna.
  - Multi-grain rice cakes usually contain some gluten grains. Purchase plain rice cakes.
- **Eat enough food:** You may add extra vegetables and fruits as needed. The menu is a basic one and needs your personal touch. This is not a calorie-restricted plan. Be sure to eat adequate calories for sufficient nutrient intake.
- **Eat regular meals:** Eating consistently throughout the day will help keep your blood sugar stable. You may want to use the suggested snacks as needed for hunger or cravings. Make extra food at meals so you have leftovers to eat as snacks.
- **Choose organic:** Whenever possible, select fresh foods and organically-grown fruits and vegetables to reduce your intake of pesticides and chemical residues. Wash fruits and vegetables (even organically-grown ones!) thoroughly.

- **Choose cold-pressed oils:** “Cold-pressed” oils were not heated in the processing and tend to be healthier than oils that have been heated. Heat breaks down the oil. Of course, organic oils are always preferred when possible. Note that it is difficult to find organic canola oil.
- **Eliminate caffeine:** Caffeine-containing beverages are not on this diet. If you are consuming these drinks on a regular basis, you will want to reduce your caffeine intake slowly, rather than abruptly stopping it, to prevent withdrawal symptoms. Try drinking half decaf/half regular coffee for a few days, and then slowly reduce intake of all caffeine. You can first transition to decaffeinated coffee in place of caffeinated coffee (the same with tea), before removing all coffee and/or tea.
- **Drink enough water:** Remember to drink adequate amounts of plain, filtered water each day: six to eight 8-oz. glasses daily should be your goal. You may add freshly squeezed lemon or lime for extra flavor.
- **Get rest:** Strenuous or prolonged exercise may be reduced for part of this program or, in some cases for the entire program, to allow the body to heal more effectively without the additional burden from exercise. Adequate rest and stress reduction is also important to the success of this program. A light, daily walk may be the perfect exercise during this time.
- **If you eat meat:** Choose free-range and/or organically raised chicken, turkey, and lamb. Cold-water fish (e.g., salmon, mackerel, cod, sardines) is an excellent source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids, which are important nutrients on this diet. Shellfish (such as shrimp, crab, clam, oyster, etc.) should be avoided due to its high-allergy potential.
- **If you are a vegetarian:** Consume more beans, rice, quinoa, amaranth, teff, millet, and buckwheat.

## THE ROLE OF ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS IN THE ELIMINATION DIET

Inflammation is when you have pain, redness, and swelling in the body. With inflammation, we tax our immune system's response. It is best to reduce this response so it is not active long-term. Inflammation is thought to be one of the main conditions involved in chronic disease.

The reason why we mention inflammation on the Elimination Diet is because all food reactions create inflammation in your body. It could happen in the gut, giving you pain, diarrhea and/or constipation. It could occur in your joints, giving you arthritis-type symptoms.

If you want to ensure that your eating is even more anti-inflammatory, you will want to include and exclude the following foods in the respective categories below.

### Anti-Inflammatory Foods to Include:

In general, fresh fruits and vegetables, and foods that provide omega-3 fats are the best way to provide anti-inflammatory support to your body. The typical American diet contains a higher percentage of omega-6 fats which can be proinflammatory when they are out of balance with omega-3 fats.

Consider these features:

1. **Fatty fish**, such as wild-caught salmon, mackerel, cod, tuna, and sardines, will give you a balance of essential fatty acids high in anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats.
2. **Grass-fed lamb or buffalo** actually contain significant amounts of omega-3 fats that grain-fed animals are lacking.
3. **Nuts and seeds**, especially almonds and walnuts, and flax seeds also contain omega-3 fats and healthy fiber.
4. **Dark leafy greens**, such as kale, broccoli, collards, cabbage, and other cruciferous vegetables high in fiber, may protect your body from pro-inflammatory molecules called cytokines. They are also high in the phytonutrients called glucosinolates that assist your body in detoxification.
5. **Red and blue colored fruits and vegetables** such as red cabbage and onion, red bell pepper, all berries, red grapes, cherries, and plums also contain anti-inflammatory phytonutrients.
6. **Extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO) and olives** contain anti-inflammatory phytonutrients called polyphenols.
7. **Moist heat cooking under low temperatures**, such as crock-pot cooking creates less inflammatory by-products such as AGEs (advanced glycation end factors), acrylamides, and others.
8. **Certain spices**, such as turmeric, ginger, oregano, garlic, rosemary, cayenne, cloves, and cinnamon have anti-inflammatory properties due to the inhibition of pro-inflammatory molecules in the body. Use them in combination with your food, especially when using high-heat cooking methods.

## Inflammatory Foods to Exclude Even After the Elimination Diet:

Focusing on anti-inflammatory foods in your diet is not the only aspect to consider. What you DON'T eat is of equal importance.

During your time on the Elimination Diet, and even afterwards, you will want to reduce the following:

1. **Trans-fats:** You find these in processed foods like cakes, cookies, bagels, and crackers.
2. **Refined sugars:** Added refined sugars are pervasive in processed foods. You have to read the labels very carefully for sugars such as HFCS, corn sugar, corn syrup, and sucrose.
3. **Foods with a high glycemic response:** If a food has a high glycemic response that means that your blood sugar could go up significantly after you eat the food. High sugar peaks in your blood are not healthy and can stress your pancreas to produce insulin. Over time, the body can be less equipped to handle these high-sugar foods, so the body becomes inflamed when they are eaten due to the high-sugar and high levels of insulin produced. Examples of foods with a high glycemic response are refined grains and breads, desserts, sweetened beverages, and highly processed prepared foods. Rice and bananas, both of which are on the Elimination Diet, are moderately high in glycemic impact so you will want to eat them together with protein to offset any blood sugar spikes.
4. **High omega-6 oils such as corn or soy:** Most people eat high amounts of refined vegetable oils in their diet through the consumption of processed foods. These oils have high amounts of omega-6 fats and too little omega-3 fats. When the omega-6 fat level is too high compared with the omega-3 amount in the body, it could activate enzymes involved in inflammation. The goal is to balance those two types of fats.
5. **Gluten-containing foods (wheat, rye, barley, spelt, kamut):** More people are learning that they have a gluten intolerance. While it is unknown why there is such an increase, it has been thought that the genetic modification of these grains in the modern era of agriculture has led to changes in how most people digest them in the gut. For some people, wheat may be more of an issue; while for others, all of these grains could provoke inflammatory-related symptoms.
6. **Saturated animal fats from grain-fed red meats:** Dietary fat has had a long-time bad reputation. However, there are many types of fats and they are not all inflammatory – it is taking in too much poor quality fat that makes it problematic. New research suggests that a high-fat meal, especially from animal foods, could lead to inflammation in the body. Adding vegetables to the meal helped to offset the inflammation. This finding does not mean that you should not eat animal foods, but if you do, you should have vegetables with the meal.
7. **Dairy-containing foods:** Foods that contain dairy such as milk, yogurt, cheeses, and butter, in large amounts, may be inflammatory in certain individuals. This effect may be due to the milk itself or to the contaminants in the milk, such as growth hormone and antibiotics that were given to the cow.
8. **High-temperature cooking with fats:** The process of cooking can lead to the formation of inflammatory compounds in foods. Foods that take on a brown color with cooking are most notable

for levels of these compounds (e.g., fried potatoes, fried, broiled, grilled, and roasted meats and fish, pastries, pizza crust, bacon, etc.). You may want to keep this information in mind both during and after the Elimination Diet, using slow-cook methods, as well as poaching and steaming methods instead of grilling, broiling, and frying.

## GUIDELINES FOR REINTRODUCING FOODS

### How to Get Started

To help you identify potential problem foods once you've completed the Elimination Diet, the foods suspected to be associated with symptoms ("challenge foods") should be reintroduced into your diet at 2-day intervals.

1. On the first day of the reintroduction phase, you may choose whatever food you miss the most or crave the most, or ate often. The order of reintroduction of foods is not critical.
2. Eat a generous amount of that food throughout Day 1 (2-3 average size portions), while continuing to eat the other foods from the Elimination Diet. During that day, and the next (Day 2), record any symptoms you notice on the Food Reintroduction Symptom Tracker Chart.
3. If there is no reaction to the food during this 2-day period, you may keep that food in your food plan and reintroduce a second food in the same manner (introduce the food on Day 3 and watch for any symptoms on Day 3 and Day 4). If no reaction, keep that food in your diet and add the third challenge food and so on.

If any food is associated with symptoms, stop eating that food immediately, wait until the symptoms clear, and reintroduce the next food. You may retest any foods that give you symptoms after you have tested all of your challenge foods, using the same procedure of 1-day eating the food followed by a 24-hour waiting period and noting symptoms during this 2-day period.

### The Order of Testing Your Challenge Foods

Below are the various types of foods that have been eliminated. Develop a priority order as to how you'd like to reintroduce them:

#### **Dairy, Soy, Corn, Peanuts, Eggs, Beef, Pork, Shellfish**

Some people eliminate wheat throughout the entire time of food challenge, adding it back last. After the above foods, you may begin to challenge the remaining foods that you avoided during the Elimination Diet such as barley, rye, coffee/tea (regular or decaf), chocolate, alcohol, sweeteners, food additives, etc.

For each of these categories of food, identify pure forms of a sample food to eat (no additives or ingredients that you have been eliminating, such as sugar or preservatives, in these foods). The following are examples of pure foods from each of these food categories.

## Types and Amounts of Foods to Re-Introduce

Food/Group	Challenge Food (Examples)	Average Portion Size
Wheat/gluten	100% whole wheat cereal (e.g., Wheatena) 100% whole wheat noodles	½ cup 1 cup
Dairy	Milk (skim, 1%, 2%, or whole milk) Cheese (any whole milk cheese, no additives)	1 cup 1 ounce
Corn	Fresh or frozen corn kernels	½ cup or 1 small cob
Pork	Cooked meat, not in a casserole	3-6 ounces
Egg	Hard or soft boiled or poached	2 eggs
Peanuts	Raw or dry roasted peanuts Peanut butter made of 100% peanuts only	¼ cup nuts 2 T. peanut butter
Soy	Edamame Soy milk Tofu, tempeh	½ cup 1 cup ½ cup
Shellfish	Challenge individual shellfish each time*	3-6 ounces
Barley, rye	Cooked barley or rye cereal 100% Rye crackers	½ cup 2-3 crackers

\*It is not uncommon to react to only 1 type of shellfish, such as shrimp but not others, so it is wise to challenge each separately.

### Pitfalls of Challenging Foods

When assessing the other foods you have eliminated, such as coffee or caffeinated beverages, chocolate, food additives, or alcohol, remember to challenge JUST that food and not another food that you are questioning at the same time.

Examples:

1. Chocolate candy also contains sugars, so beware of any reaction to a candy bar, as you will not know if you are reacting to the chocolate or the sugar, or even some of the other additives!
2. Do not challenge a mocha drink that contains coffee AND chocolate, or a coffee drink that contains some alcohol.

Other types of food used for challenging that may cause confusion include pizza or lasagna, which contain both dairy and wheat/gluten. It is also not unusual to react to wheat but not the other gluten grains; rye or barley.

**The Takeaway: Reintroduce “pure,” uncomplicated foods so you get the right information about the effect of that food on your body rather than the combination of foods.**

### Reactions to Challenge Foods

If you have a clear negative reaction to a food, stop eating that food immediately.

Potential reactions you might experience include:

- Diarrhea or constipation
- Fatigue, depression, anxiety
- Gas, bloating and/or abdominal pain
- Headache
- Muscle or joint pain
- Skin irritations or break outs
- Insomnia
- Sinus congestion or runny nose
- Itching or flushing

Track these symptoms on the Food Reintroduction Delayed Response Chart form that will be provided to you by your healthcare provider along with instructions on how to chart your symptoms on this form.

**IMPORTANT: If you have symptoms after challenging a food, stop eating that food immediately and allow the symptoms to completely clear before starting your next food. You can return to the problem food and retest it after you have tested each of the challenge foods.**

## Removing Foods Associated with Symptoms

Remove any foods that give you symptoms from your diet for the next 3 – 6 months. During this time, your healthcare practitioner may recommend medical foods or dietary supplements to help support your body to heal.

After you've completed the initial testing of all the foods that have been removed during the Elimination Diet food plan, you also may wish to test individual foods within a single food grouping to see if you may be sensitive to certain forms of the food.

If you choose to go further with this testing, you'll include a variety of foods within that same grouping.

For example, within the dairy grouping, you can test cow's milk cheese, sheep cheese, and goat cheese. Yogurt and butter may often be tolerated, when milk is not.

In the wheat grouping, you could test sprouted wheat products, spelt, emmer (farro), einkorn, and any other ancient forms of wheat or sourdough wheat.

Use the same process you used in the original challenge testing of introducing only one food at a time for 1-day with 24 hours observation. If no reactions, proceed to the next food in that group. If you have symptoms, wait until all symptoms clear, then test the next food in that group.

**Contact your healthcare practitioner if you have any questions while reintroducing foods.**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the difference between a food allergy, food intolerance, and food sensitivity?**

A food allergy is an immediate, pronounced immune reaction to a specific food that occurs every time you eat even small amounts. For example, you might experience breathing difficulties or anaphylactic shock. When you eat a food that you are allergic to, your immune system will immediately identify it as foreign, and attack its proteins, resulting in allergic symptoms (swelling, itching, breathing difficulties, etc.). While the allergic reaction is mediated by the immune system (IgE), reactions that are due to sensitivity or intolerance are associated with delayed (by several hours or days) or hidden symptoms that are difficult to interpret. They, too, could involve the immune system (IgG), as often occurs with sensitivities, or may be due to the way your body processes a food because it lacks an enzyme, as in lactose intolerance.

While it is common to call all adverse food reactions “hidden food allergy,” a large portion of these reactions are actually considered to be intolerance or sensitivity. Other than lactose intolerance, there are other important intolerances to sometimes consider when looking at chronic symptoms; histamine, salicylate, fructose, and gluten intolerance to name a few. In general, food intolerance refers to responses to food or naturally-occurring compounds in foods that are not allergy-related, but may be due to a variety of reasons, including an inability to digest and assimilate nutrients.

Your healthcare practitioner will help you to determine whether you have a food allergy and/or food intolerances.

### **Isn't a blood test to determine my food allergies, intolerances and/or sensitivities more accurate than following the Elimination Diet?**

Blood tests that claim to identify food reactions have not been proven to be as dependable and accurate as the Elimination Diet and subsequent challenging of foods in identifying problem foods. You may prefer to have written “proof” by doing a blood test, but the results of blood testing may not tell the full story. Food intolerances may not show up on these blood tests since there may be no actual immune response.

### **What if the Elimination Diet doesn't get rid of my symptoms?**

When the Elimination Diet does not bring resolution to your symptoms, it may be necessary to delve further with your healthcare provider. You may first want to assess whether you were consistently compliant with the diet and whether you did the food challenges correctly. To achieve good results, it is necessary to follow the diet 100%. It's better to spend the time to do it right the first time rather than have to do the program another time, which will be an inconvenience.

If you did the diet correctly, your healthcare practitioner may decide to put you on another protocol to address other issues, perhaps a food plan geared specifically to eliminate certain sugars, or maybe a plan to remove foods that contain one or more of the following; histamines, nightshades, salicylates, and or oxalates.



### **What do I eat in place of bread?**

Rice cakes and tortillas made from rice or hemp can be an acceptable substitute for a sandwich. It might also be a good idea to eat less grain carbohydrates during this 3-week period. You may also want to use a large lettuce leaf as a substitute “wrap” for vegetables and/or meats.

### **Can I use salt while I am on this diet?**

Taste your food before sprinkling on salt and use it sparingly. Choose sea salt over refined, iodized salt. If you have been advised to restrict your salt intake, look for salt-free seasonings. Your local health food store offers a variety of these products.

### **What additional spices or flavorings can I use?**

All spices and herbs are encouraged as they will enhance the natural flavors of food and contain powerful phytonutrients with antioxidant and anticancer properties. Experiment with your favorite herbs and spices, or try some new ones. Fresh herbs should be added near the end of cooking, while dried herbs should be added near the start of cooking.

### **Which condiments can I use?**

All types of vinegar are allowed (balsamic, ume plum, unflavored rice, apple cider, tarragon) and will help enhance the flavor of your vegetables. The following condiments all contain added sugars or other ingredients that are not used on this program, so must be avoided: chocolate, ketchup, relish, chutney, soy sauce, tamari, barbecue sauce, teriyaki, sweet and sour pickles. Please check all labels for any prepared food if you are unsure of its acceptability.

### **Legumes usually cause me to have gas and bloating. What can I do?**

Legumes are desirable because they are high in protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. You might try to increase your intake slowly over the course of 1-3 weeks. Soaking beans for one half-hour up to six hours (overnight) before cooking and then discarding the water may also cut down on some of the gas that many people experience. Rinsing the legumes you buy in cans well can also be helpful. You may find that certain legumes work better for you than others. Lentils and green peas, for instance, are often easier for some people to tolerate. If you continue to have difficulty eating these foods, there is also the possibility that you can be sensitive to them. Talk with your healthcare provider about how to proceed with determining whether this is the case.

### **Can I use canned vegetables instead of fresh vegetables with this diet?**

Fresh and frozen vegetables are preferable because they retain more of their vitamins and generally have less added salt. Canned legumes (chick peas, black beans, kidney beans, etc.) and tomatoes are generally acceptable, but rinse the legumes well before using.

### **What can I use instead of butter on my vegetables and potatoes?**

Extra-virgin, cold pressed olive oil or organic, virgin coconut oil each have a distinctive flavor that adds a very pleasant flavor to vegetables.

### **If I am not sure of a reaction, what do I do next?**

If you are not sure whether you had a food reaction, it is best to challenge that food again. Be sure that you are having a typical day on a challenge day. In other words, if you wake up with a headache that is unusual for you, do not try anything new that day. Similarly, if you awaken with low energy, it might be difficult to separate any food reactions. Be sure you get enough of the food to get a good challenge. If no reaction happens the second time, then that food is more than likely not a trigger food for you.

### **If I avoid all my trigger foods for 3 months, how do I know when it might be ok to eat them?**

After 3 months, you can try to challenge the foods again. However, you may still react, and if you do you might try again after another 3-6 months. Other reactions may be “fixed” and no matter how long you are off that food, you will still react. These are most likely to be the true food allergies.

### **How often may I eat a food that is now “ok” for me, according to re-challenging?**

The answer is different for everyone. After finding that you had no reaction on re-challenging, you might wait at least four days before trying it again. It is probably best to have a typical portion a couple of times a week. If you think you might be having a minor reaction, note this, and then wait a week between each time. This is not an exact science, so you must use your judgment and pay attention your body’s messages.

### **I’ve heard of different types of elimination diets. How is this one from IFM different?**

There are many types of elimination diets, ranging from very restrictive (eating only one food a day or just a few foods each day), to less restrictive (eliminating only one food or food group for a period of time). The Elimination Diet, developed by IFM, can be a very useful way to begin to identify problem foods, particularly when there is no suggestion of what foods may be connected to your chronic complaints. This dietary approach includes elimination of gluten and dairy foods, along with pork, beef, corn, eggs, soy, peanuts, shellfish, caffeine, alcohol, and refined sugars. Some practitioners may prefer the simpler elimination of only gluten or dairy foods if those particular foods are suspicious.

#### **Examples of Typical Elimination Diets**

- Traditional Elimination Diet (as described above)
- Oligo-antigenic Diet, a very limited diet that eliminates many more foods while eating a very small number of foods that generally cause no few reactions
- Gluten-free diet eliminates only gluten-containing grains
- Casein-free diet eliminates only dairy products that contain casein

## RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Changing food habits can be a complex, difficult, and sometimes confusing process. It doesn't have to be, so we have included recipes, snack suggestions, a shopping list, and other information to make it a "do-able" process. Look over this information carefully. If you have any questions about the diet, or any problems, please call for assistance. Often issues can be resolved quickly.

The following handouts are available from your healthcare practitioner to help you use the IFM Elimination Diet:

- Elimination Diet Food List (color visual handout) and Quick Start (back side)
- Food Reintroduction Symptom Tracker
- Hidden Ingredients to Avoid
- A 7-day Menu Plan and Shopping List
- Recipes