
FOOD ALLERGIES AND ECZEMA

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Some important definitions re food allergy and food intolerance
 - Foods and additives commonly associated with Eczema
 - How to manage elimination diets and food challenges
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DEFINITIONS: ALLERGY VS INTOLERANCE

ALLERGY

- **Onset** is often early in life
 - **IgE** immune mechanisms involved
 - **Presents** as eczema, rashes, hives, vomiting, respiratory distress and sometimes anaphylaxis
 - **Timing** is immediate and at every contact
 - **Common Foods:** peanut, egg, milk, fish, soy, wheat, tree nuts, potato
 - **Other Common Allergens** are: dust mite, pollens- trees grass etc, animal dander
 - **Best outcome:** complete avoidance
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FOOD INTOLERANCE

INTOLERANCE

- **Onset:** occurs at any age
 - **Non- IgE** mediated (skin and blood tests not helpful)
 - **Presents** as eczema, non specific rash, hives - also irritability, reflux, aches and pains, ADHD, irritable bowel
 - **Timing** can be delayed, not always on exposure
 - **Foods** may be natural chemicals and preservatives
 - **Outcome:** reduce overall load
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DIAGNOSIS OF FOOD REACTIONS

Food Allergy

- Tests – Skin Prick Tests
- Patch Tests – less common
- Blood Test – IgE, RAST test
- Avoidance and challenge of suspect foods

Food Sensitivity

Few Tests - ? IgG blood tests useful

Avoid and challenge the suspect food chemical or additive is the main diagnostic criteria

FOODS COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH SKIN RASH/ECZEMA

- Milk and other dairy products –common in babies
 - Egg
 - Peanut
 - Wheat and other grains – oats, corn, rye
 - Fish and shellfish
 - Soy, sesame
 - Potato, tomato, strawberry
 - Salicylates- orange, berries, pineapple, spicy foods
 - Amines – chocolate, tinned fish, strong cheese
 - Yeasts, moulds – vegemite, bread, beer, cheese
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COMMON FOOD ADDITIVES THAT MAY CAUSE PROBLEMS

Additive	Foods	Additive No
Sulphites	wine, dried fruit	220-228
Food colours	cordial, soft drink	102 -155
Benzoate	soft drink/snack food	210-213
Flavour (MSG)	snack foods, crisps	621
Sorbic Acid	low fat spreads/cheese	200-203

RIBO RASH (flavour enhancer 635 or ribonucleotides E635, 627, 631)

- Reactions often difficult to identify
- Occur within minutes, can be delayed for hours or even days. Last for a week or even longer. It may come and go and travel over the body during that time.



Common Foods with these additives:

- Instant noodles, flavoured chips, canned soups or stocks and stock cubes, pies, party pies, sausage rolls, chicken stuffing
- Seafood extenders
- Many others
- See Web site –



www.fedupwithfoodadditives.com

DUST MITE ALLERGY

- Very common in Queensland
 - May cause exacerbation of the skin rash
 - Immunotherapy for dust mite via sublingual or injections of dust mite vaccine may help eczema significantly, by decreasing the immune load
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THE ELIMINATION AND CHALLENGE DIETS

Why we do this

- When food is avoided for a period of time the amount of allergen or chemical decreases in the system over time – symptoms improve
 - When food is then challenged at a later period the skin or other reaction to that food may be more noticeable – symptoms get much worse
 - Problem foods are thus more easily identified
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1. BE SURE THE DIET IS STRICT

- A good knowledge of the foods and chemicals to be eliminated is important
 - Small amounts of some foods may have a negative effect if taken regularly, so the outcome of challenge may be unclear
 - Reading labels is a minefield –yes, but you have to do it!
 - May need a dietitian/health practitioner with a special interest
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2. HOW LONG TO ELIMINATE

Food allergies

- ❑ Most foods should be eliminated for at least 2 weeks strictly and symptom free (if possible) for 3-5 days

Food sensitivities

- ❑ 3 weeks elimination is better, the load is less and the challenges is more obvious
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3. THE CHALLENGES - THE MEDICAL PROBLEM DEFINES THE CHALLENGE

**Anaphylaxis – do not challenge suspect
foods – carry epi pen at all times**

**Rash, eczema, asthma – small amounts of the
food to start and then continue normally for
3+days if no problems**

**Babies will often require shorter times for the
elimination and the challenges**

4. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING FOOD CHALLENGE

- **If Problems – rash or other reaction**
 - ❑ Stop the challenge
 - ❑ Go back on the elimination diet
 - ❑ Record the symptoms
 - ❑ Wait for symptoms to settle, this may take about 3-4 days, sometimes longer
 - ❑ Then go to the next challenge
 - ❑ Can do the challenge again if unsure of results
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5. DO A DIARY DURING CHALLENGES

Note:

- Date
 - Time
 - Foods, drink, sauces
 - Reactions to the challenged foods
 - Time of reactions – minutes/hours/days
 - Challenge only one food at a time
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SUMMARY

1. True ALLERGY

- History, skin prick and blood test often sufficient to confirm diagnosis

2. SENSITIVITY

- More complex diagnostically requiring withdrawal and provocative testing, often needing professional guidance

3. BOTH ARE INVOLVED IN ECZEMA

- Sorting out the issues very often results in positive outcomes
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EXCELLENT WEB SITES

- <http://fedupwithfoodadditives.info/factsheets/Factslep.htm>
- http://www.medicinenet.com/food_allergy/article.htm
- http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Food_Allergies

Thank you for your attention

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