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FOOD ALLERGY TESTING

The word allergy is derived from the Greek words meaning "altered reaction" and an allergic individual usually suffers physical symptoms (e.g. headache, vomiting, rashes, migraine, asthma, etc..) when exposed to substances to which he/she is sensitive. The substance which provokes this reaction is called the allergen. It can be house dust, dog dander, foods, chemicals or even bacteria, just to name a few.

Allergy is Quite Common

Over the past few years, there has been increasing awareness of many diseases and complaints that can be caused, or contributed to, by the presence of allergies.

Allergy is quite common. Over 20% of the population is allergic to something. However, when one considers symptoms such as hay fever, wheezy bronchitis in children, minor degrees of eczema and food intolerance, the true incidence of allergy and/or intolerance to one or more environmental agents would certainly be much higher.

Explaining why the increase of intolerance to our environment as well as the food we eat would definitely include the changes in the Western diet over the last hundreds of years, in particular the refining of food, the use of chemical additives, the increased consumption of animal produce and the increasing presence of environmental pollution.

Immediate Food Reaction

As the name implies, this food reaction can occur within 3 hours after digestion. The reaction is caused by the presence of a high IgE antibody level in the blood which sets off an immediate allergic response. Symptoms can be rashes after eating an apple or headache after drinking wine.

Delayed Food Reaction

Delayed food reactions can occur up to several days after ingestion of the reactive food, making it hard to link one's symptom to the food eaten several days ago. Such hidden allergies are often the cause of many "chronic symptoms."

The immune response to delayed food reactions are often caused by antibodies other than IgE. They are IgG, IgA, IgM and IgD. These antibodies combine with the food particles in the blood to form "immune complexes" which cause inflammatory reactions in tissues. Such inflammatory reactions can occur in any part of the body, thus producing many kinds of symptoms such as headache, eczema, joint pain, mental disorders, etc.

Some conditions which are influenced or caused by food allergy/intolerance:

- Inflammatory arthritis
- Migraine and other headaches
- Childhood hyperactivity
- Sleep disturbances
- Learning disability
- Asthma, rhinitis, sinusitis
- Recurrent infection (e.g. tonsillitis)
- Infantile colic and infantile colitis
- Mouth ulcers
- Eczema and other skin rashes
- Urticaria (hives)
- Angio-oedema
- Premenstrual symptoms
- Fluid retention
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Peptic ulcers and gastritis
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis
- Fatigue and excessive sleepiness
- Depression/anxiety
- Schizophrenia and other mental illnesses
- Epilepsy
- Hypoglycemia
- Aggravation of diabetes
- Some kidney diseases
- Gall bladder symptoms
- Facial flushing
- Some types of palpitations
- Weight problems
- Celiac diseases

Diagnosis of Food Allergy

Obviously immediate food reaction can be identified easily. However, delayed food reactions are much more difficult to diagnose. According to recent research, immediate food reactions are caused by IgE antibodies. Delayed food reactions are often associated with IgG4, a subclass of the whole IgG molecule.

The food allergy test uses a combination IgE and IgG4 protocol. This test can detect both IgE and/or IgG4 allergic reactions. Thus both immediate and delayed food reactions can be detected.

Allergy Test Panels

Two food panels are available: the E-90 panel contains 95 foods in a wide variety of categories, including milk, cheese, egg, fish, seafood, grains, fruits and vegetables. The A-95 panel contains 95 additional fruits, nuts, vegetables and spices.

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