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Modern Food and Allergies – Here's the Link

Have you ever had a rash or watery eyes after consuming berries or peanut butter? What about bloating and gassiness after a tall glass of milk or that king size chocolate bar? If you answered yes, then you may be part of the majority of our population who has food allergies.

Food allergies can be categorized into three main groups: food intolerance, food hypersensitivity, and food anaphylaxis. Food intolerance is a response such as bloating and diarrhea to an ingested food or food component. Causes for such intolerances may include metabolic or toxic responses by the body to certain foods. The more severe category, food hypersensitivity, is an immunologic reaction from ingestion of a food, skin contact or inhalation of a food. Last, food anaphylaxis entails an acute systemic allergic reaction due to the release of mast cells and basophils from the body. There is a possibility for severe symptoms such as respiratory failure and heart failure resulting in death of an individual.

Through the process of altering and enhancing modern day foods, an individual's toxic load increases cumulatively while his or her nutritional status becomes ever more depleted. Our bodies have different capacities for metabolizing toxins, foods and chemicals from our food and environment because we are all biologically different. Thanks to genetic engineering, pesticides and herbicides, we're now used to bigger apples, greener peppers, and super-sized eggs. Unless there is a "Certified Organically Grown" label on the product, all fresh produce has either been sprayed, grown on mineral deficient soil or has absorbed artificial fertilizers which may contain herbicides. Predictably, boxed, frozen and canned foods are enzyme deficient after being processed at high temperatures and modified with many chemical additives.

Another major factor contributing to food allergies is the disrupted digestion of foods, resulting in larger than normal food molecules in our intestines. These incompletely digested food molecules can enter the bloodstream where they are recognized by our immune system as foreign substances. As a natural defense system, our body secretes immune cells to destroy these foreign substances. The result of this process is a series of allergic reactions and symptoms such as bloating, rashes or itchy eyes.

If you were to look inside your refrigerator, more than half the foods inside are the cause of allergy symptoms such as itching, swelling, sneezing, hives, and diarrhea. In decreasing order, meat, grains, vegetables and fruits have found to be the most common offenders for causing allergies. Eggs, fish, shellfish, nuts, and peanuts are the most common immediate hypersensitivity foods while dairy, milk, chocolate, citrus, wheat, and food colorings are most common delayed hypersensitivity foods.

The question is: what can be done to reduce, and better yet, get rid of food allergies? To start, stay away from the problem causing foods above and choose organic options when possible. A Naturopathic medicine approach would involve determining the root cause of the problem which might involve low stomach acid, leaky gut syndrome, or nutritional imbalances that may be contributing to incomplete digestion of food. A visit to a Naturopathic doctor will include full case taking and body examination to investigate the root cause.