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Allergies or food intolerances – what's the difference?

I'm often asked about the difference between food intolerances and allergies, and why we seem to have a surfeit of them in our own time. Foods that commonly cause a problem include: wheat, yeast, milk, beef, sugar, oranges, tomatoes, cheese, oats, coffee, corn and eggs. Why should this be so?

It seems likely that food intolerances have always been with us but the cause of the problem has only recently been scientifically described. Dr Herbert Rinkel suggested in 1925 that there are two types of allergic reaction. Firstly, the immediate or 'non-masked' food allergy is the kind we are all familiar with, such as the sudden and dangerous 'peanut' reaction - the immune system produces a major antibody reaction to a food the body mistakes for an invading organism (pathogen). The second form of food sensitivity - 'masked' - arises when a food is eaten regularly, often daily, and although the person feels generally unwell they do not associate the feeling with their diet. Delayed reactions are common with this type as are cravings for the food that causes the sensitivity.

Dr Richard Mc Karness describes 5 key symptoms of food intolerance or sensitivity:

Palpitations especially after eating

Sweating without exercise

Tiredness not relieved by rest

Weight changes, gain or loss

Swelling/inflammation, water retention around eyes, abdomen and ankles

If one of the above symptoms is present it is likely that a food intolerance is indicated; 2-3 symptoms strongly indicate an intolerance.

There are many techniques for testing for food intolerances including blood analysis and 'patch testing' where the skin is scratched with the potential allergen to see if there is a localised inflammation. Whilst these techniques can work well, they are both invasive and the scratch tests can make one feel quite ill afterwards! The system known as 'Health Kinesiology' is non-invasive, quick and informative. It works by placing potential allergens onto the body and testing muscle strength before and after placing the allergen. A weaker muscle response in the presence of the food being tested demonstrates a sensitivity or intolerance. The system, based on Chinese medicine's understanding of acupuncture and meridians works well.

Additionally, it is possible to pick up signs of food intolerance or sensitivity from a Colon Hydrotherapy treatment. Signs that indicate a food problem include poor peristalsis (colon muscle movement), stagnant or poorly digested food residue or poor intestinal flora (lack of 'friendly' bacteria).

Combining both a colonic with kinesiology testing has become the hallmark of my work in recent years. Having identified problem foods it is possible to formulate an eating plan to reduce symptoms, optimise nutritional health and enable you to feel well - fast! If you feel you may have food intolerances or have symptoms you think may be linked to your diet, or if you have any questions or want to book a food profile appointment do ring me on 07817 408297.

