

The Elimination Diet— Is It Right For You?

Lisa Souba

Renew
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through Yoga, Massage & Digestive Coaching

Has your world been challenged by the need to eliminate certain foods from your diet? When you go out to eat, do you often say, or hear someone else say, “I can’t have that”? I’ve been there, and I get your frustration. I remember the day when my health-care provider told me to go gluten-, wheat-, dairy-, and sugar-free! I remember sitting at the bookstore looking at cookbooks trying to figure out how to cook. I love food and I love to cook, but this change challenged me. I had no idea where to begin or what to do. Fast forward six years and I’ve figured it out. I can now enjoy all those things again because I treated my digestive health and made some lifestyle changes.

Unfortunately, we’ve succumbed to the new age of The Elimination Diet. While it’s important to eliminate foods that are creating distress in the body, it seems as though we’ve missed the boat by NOT treating the underlying root cause of the issues at hand. As I begin to work with client’s through Digestive Health Coaching, I hear more about foods being eliminated, but less about the understanding of why or how to treat the causes. Probiotics and digestive enzymes are great alternatives, but still do



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not treat the underlying problems.

There are several diets out there such as Paleo, Mediterranean, and Ketogenic. While these can provide good results, but the bigger question is: *what is your reasoning for going on one of these diets?* I’ve seen some of them work for a short period of time, but some can aggravate the digestive system during certain times of the year. Take for instance the Paleo diet. If someone has what Ayurveda calls a Pitta body type, this means they have more heat in the body. A Paleo diet in the summer can be aggravating to their system as animal proteins or tomatoes are harder for a Pitta body to digest in the hot summer months. Part of the Ayurvedic lifestyle is learning that your specific body type and proper seasonal eating are both critical to digestion and overall health.

According to the *New York Times*, food allergies have doubled in the last ten years. It makes you wonder what’s going wrong. Our bodies are becoming

more delicate or perhaps our immune systems are becoming a little more aggressive. Let’s look at wheat intolerance vs. a wheat allergy. An intolerance is the inability to digest

wheat, which will cause symptoms of indigestion, such as gas, bloating and/or constipation, nausea, or loose stools. There could be smelly gas or burping and some cramping in the abdomen. A wheat allergy, on the other hand, is a specific type of intolerance. It means that the immune system gets activated and fights any contact with wheat. Basically,

your immune system thinks it’s under attack and mounts a counter attack.

This type of intolerance is caused by digestive enzymes that have lost their ability to process wheat. The warring inside creates an inflammation and actually damages the intestines, particularly the small intestines, which are lined with little villi (finger-like hairs) that increase the surface area of the intestines so you can easily absorb nutrients, vitamins, sugar, fat and proteins. Without these villi, or when they become damaged, the food can’t get into the blood, which creates malabsorption, also known as Leaky Gut Syndrome.

Leaky Gut Syndrome is when the food we eat easily passes through the gut, affecting the gut’s ability to effectively select the right nutrients from the small intestine. Food particles now enter into the bloodstream where the immune system then becomes radically overexposed to anything we eat. In an allergic situation, a single teaspoon or



bite of the offending food can cause a reaction, such as eczema, hives or angioedema. That's where your lips, face, and/or hands swell. You could also experience hay fever, seasonal allergies, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, rheumatoid arthritis, or migraines from this reaction, or even the more severe symptom of feeling like your throat is closing.

Any time we eliminate food from our diet, we need to ask, "Is it a sign of a weakened digestive system?" If you do have a food sensitivity or allergy, you definitely want to first remove the allergen from your diet. Secondly, you want to calm the immune system by detoxifying the intestines. Eating cooling, astringent, anti-inflammatory herbs such as aloe vera, pomegranate juice, cranberry juice, and cooked cabbage will often help. Marshmallow root is a demulcent that can coat and soothe your intestines.

Fennel, cardamom, and licorice root are good digestive herbs to use when there is inflammation in the digestive tract. Toxicity that builds up in the body affects the liver. Eating leafy greens, such as cooked kale, or

eating foods high in beta carotene, like blueberries, carrots, and beets, will help heal the liver. Entering into a gentle cleanse helps to rebuild digestion. Lifestyle changes are important, too, such as getting to bed by 10 p.m. and reducing as much stress as possible.

The types of allergy or sensitivity you may experience is very specific to our unique make-up, as is how you would bring balance back into your body, so you can enjoy the foods you love to eat again. It takes time and some care to rebalance the digestive system, but it's so worth it! ■

Contact Lisa Souba at lisa@yogamassagerenew.com or (406) 600-7267, for your initial *Digestive Wellness Coaching session*. These sessions can be held in person at her Bozeman studio, or remotely via video conference calls.

NOTE: Those with celiac disease should avoid gluten, and those with severe and/or life-threatening allergies to dairy should avoid dairy, etc. If you have one of these conditions, please follow the instructions of your primary care physician.

Six-Week Series on Whole-Body Wellness!

This dynamic program can help you **get your digestive system moving towards a more balanced state**. Each week we focus on one lifestyle habit, such as appropriate foods for your unique body type. The habits build upon each other and ripple out to have a profound and lasting impact on your health.

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