



What Should I Be Feeding My Family?

Dear Bethel,

I really want to make healthy, balanced meals for my family, but there is so much conflicting information out there that I find it really confusing! Could you shed some light on the subject, so I can feed my family with confidence?

Thanks,
Susan



Dear Susan,

Last time I shared with you the basics that are widely agreed upon and supported by the scientific literature:

- Eat LOTS of vegetables and fruits.
- Include all the colors of the rainbow.
- Get your greens every single day!
- Focus on whole, unprocessed foods.
- Keep things balanced by including protein, healthy fats, and fiber in every meal.

Now let's take a closer look at how you can fine-tune things for your family. The most important concept to keep in mind here is bio-individuality, which simply means that each person's makeup and dietary needs are unique, like a fingerprint! Some people have the enzymes to digest dairy, while others don't. Some people need to include grains in their diet in order to feel their best, while others experience symptoms ranging from joint pain to brain fog when they eat grains. Name a food, and there will be someone, somewhere, who doesn't react well to it!

So how do you sort out which foods work best for you and your family? The first step is to tune in and listen to what your bodies are telling you. Consider whether you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Low energy
- Brain fog
- Headache
- Joint or muscle pain
- Post nasal drip or stuffiness
- Itching, rashes, or skin irritation
- Heartburn or acid reflux/GERD symptoms
- Weight gain of 2 or more pounds from one day to the next
- Bloating, gas, constipation, or diarrhea
- Mood swings or irritability

If you or your family members experience any of these, there is a pretty good chance that you are eating something that is

triggering a reaction! Other environmental triggers could be involved as well, but food is often the biggest culprit.

At this point, you have a couple of options. One is to have a food sensitivity test done. (These are usually available through naturopathic doctors.) The down side is they can be expensive, and they are not always accurate.

The second option is to do an elimination diet, and see if any of your symptoms disappear. This option does require some focused effort on your part, but if you do it well, it can yield some big rewards!

Doing an elimination diet in conjunction with keeping a food/mood/symptom journal is a tool I have used to help my clients resolve problems like chronic itching, rosacea, digestive issues, and headaches. If the idea of doing an elimination diet resonates with you, but you're not sure how to get started, don't hesitate to reach out for support! Sometimes we just need someone to guide us through the process and hold us accountable. ■

Blessings and best wishes as you set out to discover the bio-individual needs of your family!
Bethel

BETHEL WAGNER received her training from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, where she studied a variety of dietary theories and practical lifestyle coaching methods. With her knowledge, she co-creates personalized lifestyle programs based on each client's goals to move them toward their ideal vision of health within each one's unique body, lifestyle, preferences, and resources. Distance, phone and online sessions available.

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