IgE/IgG Food Sensitivity Testing

Food sensitivities have been implicated in a wide range of medical conditions, affecting virtually every part of the body - from mildly uncomfortable symptoms, such as indigestion, skin problems, low energy and muscle aches and pains, to severe and chronic illness such as irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis, sinusitis, depression and insomnia. Virtually any chronic ailment can be made worse by food sensitivities.

People commonly suspect the food they eat may be disagreeing with them. However, pinpointing the offending food(s) can be frustrating and difficult. The IgE/IgG Food Sensitivity blood test allows for individuals to take the guesswork out of detecting those foods that don't agree with them. Here are a few frequently asked questions about food sensitivity testing:

1. What are food sensitivities?

Food sensitivities are an immune or physiological reaction of the body to certain foods. Food sensitivities can be caused by food allergies or food intolerances. With a food allergy, the immune system produces antibodies whenever you ingest a specific food. Reactions to food allergies are usually immediately after eating and range from mild to severe. Food intolerances tend to occur when certain foods are eaten too frequently or in excess and the body's ability to digest the food is impaired. Food intolerances are often more difficult to identify as the reaction is often delayed and can occur after two to three days of eating the offending food(s).

With food allergies the body releases histamine, which results in runny nose, watery eyes, and production of throat mucous. More severe reactions can include abdominal cramping, hives, skin rashes, diarrhea, or even anaphylactic reactions. The symptoms of food intolerances are similar and include gas, bloating, disruption of normal bowel movement, skin rashes, decreased energy, impaired sleep and other symptoms.

With food sensitivities, the body releases antibodies, classified as IgE or IgG mediated reactions. IgE antibodies are produced immediately when you eat a specific food to which you are intolerant. IgG antibodies are a delayed response to food allergens.

2. What causes food sensitivities?

The underlying causes of food sensitivities varies from person to person and includes stress, genetics, poor digestion, poor diet, imbalance in gut microflora, lack of certain digestive enzymes, poor immune function and improper eating habits. Food sensitivities tend to be common early in life, during puberty, menopause and when the body is unwell or has undergone intense shock or stress.

3. How can I test for food sensitivities?

There are three main ways to test for food sensitivities. The first is a food challenge where you omit the suspected offending food to see if the symptoms improve and disappear.

The second is the food elimination diet, during which the most common food sensitivities are removed for two weeks and then one new food is introduced every three days over the next four to six weeks. The reintroduction phase of the diet allows one to systematically monitor how each common allergen food is handled and if any adverse effects are caused by the food. The food elimination diet is a very inexpensive

and effective way of identifying immediate and severe food sensitivities, especially when a person is very diligent with the process.

There is a blood test that will assist in identifying mild and delayed food sensitivities. This test is more suitable for those individuals that find the food elimination difficult. The blood test is a screening tool for the detection of IgE and IgG antibody response to specific foods. It is an ELISA test, which stands for Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay.

4. How does the ELISA blood test for food sensitivities work?

The ELISA assay consists of testing your body's reaction to a variety of foods. After your blood is exposed to specific foods the presence of immediate and delayed reactions, namely IgE and IgG respectively, is measured. The range of antibody-food protein complexes ranges from no reaction to severe reactions. This is important to help gauge the amount of time to eliminate types of foods from the patient's diet before seeing therapeutic results.

5. Do I have to eat or avoid certain foods prior to the blood test?

No. It is best to maintain your usual dietary habits, consuming a variety of foods when possible. If you know that you have had a previous adverse reaction or anaphylactic reaction to food, it is important to continue to avoid that food. You can continue to eat regular meals before the testing, as it is not necessary to fast.

6. Do I need to discontinue my medications prior to testing?

Anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive medications, such as prednisone and cyclosporine respectively, depress the immune system and may interfere with the test results. If you are on anti-inflammatory or immunosuppressive medications, consult with your Naturopathic Doctor about the applicability of this test for you. All other medications should be maintained.

7. What is the cost of the food sensitivity testing?

The general test for 96 foods costs $325 + GST. Other tests can be done to look for more specific foods such as the vegetarian food panel, spices and herbs, environmental inhalants and pollutants panels. The costs for these panels are individually priced and/or priced in combination with other panels.

For further information about our Food Sensitivity Testing and other related tests, please ask your Naturopathic Doctor at Naturopathic Foundations Health Clinic.

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