

Getting started on your healthy gut - a guide to the elimination diet

What is an elimination diet?

An elimination diet, also called a hypoallergenic diet, temporarily removes foods that are known to cause allergic reactions, processed foods, and foods that contain hormones, antibiotics and chemicals. It consists of whole, unprocessed foods, mainly from plants. The purpose is to eat a diet without all foods that could be harmful for you, allowing your body to rest and heal on a simple diet. Then you reintroduce potential food allergens one at a time to find out precisely how you react to each food. So powerful!

Phase 1: Elimination

The minimum time period for the initial phase of the diet is three weeks. People with chronic health conditions and digestive problems sometimes choose to extend this phase to allow their bodies to rest and heal.

A light gray circular icon containing the text "3+ WEEKS" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The "3" is significantly larger than the "+" and "WEEKS".

3+
WEEKS

A light gray circular icon containing the text "+1 AT A TIME" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The "+" and "1" are significantly larger than "AT A TIME".

+1
AT A TIME

Phase 2: Re-introduction

After the elimination phase, foods are reintroduced one at a time. This is an exciting phase, because after several weeks of eating a clean, hypoallergenic diet it's possible to discover the effect of individual foods on your system. Does dairy cause digestive upset for you? Does wheat cause eczema or contribute to chronic migraines? How does sugar affect you?

Phase 3: Your new lifestyle

After gaining valuable knowledge about how foods affect you, you will be empowered to make informed decisions about your diet. You may decide to remove some foods from your diet entirely, because you feel so much better without them. You may choose to enjoy some foods on occasion, knowing their effect on your body and being willing to accept the price you'll pay for eating them. You may even find that they are less toxic to you when consumed in moderation.



Why Try an Elimination Diet?

There are many reasons to follow an elimination diet. How many of these boxes can you check? Any one of these reasons is reason enough to try an elimination diet!

- Suspect that you have a food allergy or sensitivity, but you're not sure of the source
- Experience frequent gas or stomach upset
- Are often constipated or have diarrhea / loose stool
- Have been diagnosed with an autoimmune or digestive disorder
- Notice that you're not digesting all of your food
- Have inflammation
- Experience frequent headaches
- Have unexplained hair loss
- Experience negative results when taking vitamin supplements
- Are ready to follow a healthier lifestyle and want to know more about your body

Ready to get started? Success begins with preparation!

Preparing for success

There are a few steps to take in advance to prepare your surroundings and set you up for success.

- 1. Plan your meals** for the first few days. Include your favorites from the list of “foods to enjoy” on the elimination diet. Purchase the groceries and prep any food that can be made ahead of time.
- 2. Talk to your family and friends** about what you’re doing and why. They can help to support you. Perhaps your friend will meet you for a walk or tea instead of drinks at the pub. Are the other people in your household also starting the diet? If you usually prepare meals for family members who will not be on the program, talk to them about workarounds. Planning ahead is key!
- 3. Build a support network.** Even if a family member or friend is joining you, it can still help to reach out to others for fresh ideas.
- 4. Know your health baseline.** Take your resting heart rate and blood pressure before starting the elimination diet. If you have a chronic health issue, check in with your doctor before you start.
- 5. Be aware that your body may detoxify** in the first few days. Depending on how clean your previous diet was, you may experience temporary symptoms such as headache, fatigue and general malaise. Drink plenty of clean, fresh water to flush your system.

Elimination Diet

Phase 1 Food Guide

Foods to enjoy

Vegetables

- ✓ All, Except Nightshades & Corn
- ✓ Beans & Legumes (No Soy)
- ✓ Cruciferous Vegetables
- ✓ Gourds & Squash
- ✓ Leafy Greens
- ✓ Root Vegetables

Grains (Gluten Free)

- ✓ Buckwheat
- ✓ Oats
- ✓ Quinoa
- ✓ Rice

Nuts & Seeds

- ✓ Almonds
- ✓ Hazelnuts
- ✓ Pumpkin Seeds
- ✓ Sunflower Seeds
- ✓ Nut Butters From Any Above

Fruit (Not Tropical)

- ✓ Apples & Pears
- ✓ Avocados
- ✓ Berries
- ✓ Lemon / Lime
- ✓ Peaches & Nectarines
- ✓ Rhubarb

Fermented Foods

- ✓ Kimchi
- ✓ Kombucha
- ✓ Pickles (Probiotic, No Sugar)
- ✓ Sauerkraut

Meat & Seafood

Organic, grass-fed, wild caught

- ✓ Chicken & Turkey
- ✓ Lamb
- ✓ Wild Game
- ✓ Deep Water Fish (eg. Salmon, Mackerel)



Elimination Diet

Phase 1 Food Guide

Foods to avoid

Vegetables

- X Nightshades like Peppers, Tomatoes, Eggplant, Potatoes, etc.
- X Corn
- X Edamame
- X Processed/canned veggies

Fruit

- X Tropical Fruits like Bananas, Mango, Pineapple, etc.
- X Melons
- X Citrus (except limes / lemons)
- X Fruit Juice

Dairy

- X Milk, Cream, Sour Cream, etc.
- X Cheese
- X Butter
- X Yogurt
- X Eggs

Grains, Nuts & Soy

- X Bread, Pasta, Crackers
- X Oats, Barley
- X Beer
- X Peanuts, Cashews, Brazil Nuts
- X Tofu, Tempeh, Soy Milk, etc.

Beverages & Others

- X Caffeine (coffee, some teas, cocoa)
- X Alcohol (beer, wine, etc.)
- X Fruit Juice & Soft Drinks
- X Processed Foods
- X Sugar, Corn Syrup, Artificial Sweeteners

Meats & Seafood

- X Beef & Pork
- X Processed Meats (hot dogs, lunchmeat, etc.)
- X Sausages, Smoked or Canned Meats
- X Bottom-Feeding Fish (catfish, etc.)
- X Shellfish



Meal Ideas



- ✓ **Smoothies** can be a great option for breakfast. Start the day off with a drink packed with nutrients and protein from nuts and seeds.
- ✓ **Gluten-free grains** like oats, quinoa, buckwheat, rice and others make tasty hot cereals.
- ✓ **Leftovers!** Who says you can't have soup or rice and vegetables for breakfast? It's the cultural norm in many countries around the world where they don't have sugary cereals or highly processed breakfast sandwiches available at the drive-thru. And it will provide a nutritious start to your day.
- ✓ **Gluten-free pancakes** made with coconut or nut milk instead of cow's milk, topped with berries. Or lightly sauté sliced apples in coconut oil with cinnamon for an extra special topping.

Meal Ideas



- ✓ **Salads** are excellent options for lunch, and there are so many varieties. Try roasting vegetables for satisfying salads in autumn, and use seasonal vegetables in spring & summer. Remember to add protein and healthy fats for a satisfying meal.
- ✓ **Quinoa** is a complete protein and can be used as a salad base or as a grain.
- ✓ **Soups** are wonderful for lunch. While it's always preferable to make your own, if you do choose the convenience of pre-made soup, check the ingredient list. Even soups from the health food store will sometimes contain hidden sugars.

Meal Ideas



- ✓ **Soup** like lentil, bean or chicken
- ✓ **Curries** (be aware of nightshade vegetables in ingredients before they are reintroduced)
- ✓ **Chicken or fish** (baked, steamed or broiled - avoid fried foods)
- ✓ **Lettuce wraps**

Meal Ideas



The most satisfying snacks include protein and healthy fats. Make sure to combine these elements to create satiating mini-meals.

- ✓ Apple slices with raw almond butter
- ✓ Gluten free crackers with $\frac{1}{4}$ avocado mixed with apple cider vinegar or lime juice
- ✓ Raw vegetables with hummus
- ✓ Nuts like almonds, pecans, walnuts, pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds.

Sample meal plans

Day 1

Breakfast: Berry Green Smoothie with raspberries, spinach and pumpkin seeds

Morning snack: sliced apple

Lunch: Quinoa salad with spinach and walnuts

Afternoon snack: Crackers with hummus

Dinner: Coconut curry with free range chicken (if desired), mixed vegetables and brown rice

Day 2

Breakfast: Gluten free oats with blueberries and cinnamon

Morning snack: Cherries or apple

Lunch: Black bean soup with chopped avocado (avoid spicy peppers)

Afternoon snack: Celery sticks with almond butter

Dinner: Baked salmon with mustard glaze, cauliflower fried rice and steamed vegetables

Day 3

Breakfast: Mixed stewed berries with chia and flax seeds

Morning snack: Handful of nuts

Lunch: Roasted vegetables with quinoa and tahini sauce

Afternoon snack: Pear

Dinner: Spaghetti squash with white bean Alfredo sauce, broccoli, onions, garlic and herbs.

Tips

The most important thing to remember is to read ingredient lists on any food that you purchase. Processed foods can contain surprising ingredients like sugars, soy and chemicals. Rice crackers often contain potato flour.

Missing soy sauce? Try coconut aminos, available at most health food stores. Not only does it satisfy that salty-sweet craving like soy sauce, it's also a fermented food!

Include healthy fats in your meals to make them more satisfying. Avocados and almonds are your friends!

Add bone broth or veggie broth to grains to make them more nutritious and satisfying.

Hummus is a flavorful and nutritious condiment. Make your own if you can, or read the ingredient list carefully for Foods to Avoid.

Freeze local, organic berries from a local farm or farmer's market when they are in season. It's much more cost efficient and healthy than buying frozen berries at the supermarket. Some berry farms offer a cheaper U-pick option, which can be a fun family outing.

Cook dried beans, quinoa and rice on Sunday for quick lunch options during the week. Chop vegetables when you buy them so they're ready to eat.

Prepare meal bases like quinoa, kale and onions or brown rice, carrots, celery and onions. You can add different ingredients over several days, making the bases into different meals. The variations are endless.

Connect with new friends in the GutsyGuru community for an elimination diet support network. And remember to follow us on social media for recipe ideas and everyday diet hacks!

Reintroducing Foods

Ideally, you'll introduce foods one at a time. Eat or drink 2 portions per day for 3 days, and document any reactions.

Food reintroduction order ... it's your choice!

Whether you commit to 3 weeks or even longer, you'll probably look forward to reintroducing a favorite food. Foods can be reintroduced in any order. You may choose to reintroduce the nightshade vegetables like peppers and tomatoes, in order to add spicy flavors and nutritional diversity. Or perhaps you've missed coffee or bananas more.

Remember that you'll need to test individual foods in some groups. For example, each type of grain should be reintroduced separately, as some people react only to certain grains. Any foods that are often consumed together, like coffee & cream, should also be tested separately.

There are often variations of foods that are less likely to cause adverse reactions. Include those first, and see how you do. If the more reactive food is troublesome, maybe it will be a treat food only or you'll enjoy the replacement as much. For example, fewer people react to goat feta than cow feta, so reintroduce goat cheese first. If you don't enjoy the flavor of goat cheese, try cow's cheese. If you react to cow's cheese, there may be a lactose-free variety that will be easier for you to digest.

Do you usually enjoy coffee with cream? Reintroduce coffee or tea with homemade almond milk first, then test dairy milk later. You may want to break it down even further by trying lactose-free milk before regular cow's milk.

Some people decide not to reintroduce some foods that are harmful to everyone, such as highly processed snack foods, refined sugar, deep fried foods, candy and fast food. Because they contain very little nutritional value, they should be consumed infrequently as a treat food if at all.

Appendix A:

Food reintroduction diary

Keep a record of the foods you reintroduce and any reactions that you notice. Many of the eliminated foods will cause no reaction. In that case, keep the new food in your diet and move on to the next test on your list.

Use the attached pages to help plan and record your reintroduction phase!

Foods To Reintroduce

List foods in the order you'd like to add them back into your diet.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

11 _____

12 _____

13 _____

14 _____

15 _____

16 _____

17 _____

18 _____

19 _____

20 _____

FOOD 1:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 3:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 2:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 4:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 5:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 7:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 6:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 8:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 9:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 11:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 10:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 12:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 13:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 15:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 14:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 16:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 17:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 19:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 18:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

FOOD 20:

Test at least 2 meals /day, record notes & reactions

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3