

Introduction to Food Intolerance

Our food has changed drastically over the last 30 years, and so have food-related problems.

Additives are now used in healthy foods such as bread, butter, yoghurt, juice or muesli bars as well as in junk food. Reactions to food additives are related to dose, so the more you eat, the more likely you are to be affected. A British survey in 2007 found that:

- most consumers underestimate how many additives they eat
- the average consumer eats 20 additives per day (19 if foods are home-cooked)
- most consumers don't know which foods contain additives.

Effects of food additives can include:

- irritability, restlessness, difficulty falling asleep
- mood swings, anxiety, depression, panic attacks
- inattention, difficulty concentrating or debilitating fatigue
- speech delay, learning difficulties
- eczema, urticaria and other itchy skin rashes; angioedema or swelling of the lips etc often associated with rashes
- reflux, colic, stomach aches, bloating, and other irritable bowel symptoms including constipation and/or diarrhoea, sneaky poos, sticky poos, bedwetting
- headaches or migraines
- frequent colds, flu, bronchitis, tonsillitis, sinusitis; stuffy or runny nose, constant throat clearing, cough or asthma
- joint pain, arthritis, heart palpitations, racing heartbeat

Some additives that can cause problems

ARTIFICIAL COLOURS (in sweets, drinks, takeaways, cereals and many processed foods) 102 tartrazine, 104 quinoline yellow, 110 sunset yellow, 122 azorubine, 123 amaranth, 124 ponceau red, 127 erythrosine, 129 allura red, 132 indigotine, 133 brilliant blue, 142 green S, 143 fast green FCF, 151 brilliant black, 155 chocolate brown

NATURAL COLOUR 160b annatto (in yoghurts, icecreams, popcorn etc, 160a is a safe alternative)

PRESERVATIVES

200-203 sorbates (in margarine, dips, cakes, fruit products)
210-213 benzoates (in juices, soft drinks, cordials, syrups, medications)
220-228 sulphites (in dried fruit, fruit drinks, sausages, and many others)
280-283 propionates (in bread, crumpets, bakery products)
249-252 nitrates, nitrites (in processed meats like ham)

SYNTHETIC ANTIOXIDANTS (in margarines, vegetable oils, fried foods, snacks, biscuits etc)

310-312 Gallates
319-320 TBHQ, BHA, BHT (306-309 are safe alternatives)

FLAVOUR ENHANCERS (in tasty foods)

621 MSG
627, 631, 635 disodium inosinate, disodium guanylate, ribonucleotides

Natural food chemicals

Some natural chemicals called salicylates can cause the same problems as additives if consumed in large doses or by sensitive people. For problems serious enough to see a doctor, or for conditions with a diagnosis such as ADHD, eczema etc, it is best to find out more about salicylates, as well as other natural food chemicals called amines and glutamates.

These natural food chemicals are increasing in our food supply, due to increased availability of out-of-season fruit and vegetables, concentrated natural chemicals in processed foods, and added flavours. Foods high in salicylates include strawberries, kiwifruit, avocados, sultanas and other dried fruits, citrus, pineapple, broccoli, pizza toppings, tomato sauce, olive oil and tea. Cheese and chocolate are particularly high in amines. Salicylate sensitivity can be triggered or worsened by medications such as aspirin and other NSAIDs (non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as Nurofen and lotions eg anti-arthritis, salicylate-containing teething gel. Flavours and fragrances such as fruit or mint (eg in toothpaste) are another source of salicylates.

People rarely realise that they are affected by salicylates or amines unless they eat a very large dose in a short time (eg salicylates at Christmas or amines at Easter) or until they reduce their intake. This is because these food chemicals are eaten so frequently that the effects fluctuate and can build up very slowly.

For more information, visit www.fedup.com.au for details on support groups, books/DVD, dietitians and local contacts.