THE ELIMINATION DIET
AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO LEARN HOW FOOD AFFECTS HEALTH

ORGANIC NEWSROOM
Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.
—Hippocrates
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Introduction

The Elimination Diet is a very mutable strategy by which one can work to understand better the impact food has on health. Just like the engine performance of a car suffering from the use of bad gasoline; so too does the human body underperform with poor quality sources of fuel. Most considerations of health benefits from diet, exercise, supplements or even medications deserve an asterisk denoting differences between individuals. Research in support of certain dietary supplements, medications, or lifestyle changes is unable to fully account for the differences among individuals on larger scale population diversity. Simply put; what works for ninety-nine people might not always work for the hundredth.

The Elimination Diet focuses on how food affects health on a holistic level. It is an often varying framework that can be used to help an individual better understand how food affects them—not everyone else. The Elimination Diet can help you better understand the root causes of allergies, brain fog, chronic fatigue, and a myriad of other chronic health concerns. This diet is truly powerful; isolating the most basic of physiological responses to food. One will feel hunger, sadness, renewed energy—and every sensation in between while undertaking this endeavor. It’s much like a detoxification program from the modern Western Diet, and potentially involving drastic changes for most participants. This guide serves to introduce some of the most basic principles of the Elimination Diet, its nuances, and likely outcomes. The most up-to-date version of this eBook can be downloaded at the following URL address:

https://www.organicnewsroom.com/ebook/elimination-diet/
Medical Disclaimer

This guide is presented as information only, doesn’t serve as qualified medical advice, and should at no point be used to diagnose or treat any health concern. You should always consult with a licensed health provider before considering any dietary, lifestyle, nutritional, or medication changes.
Food Affects Health

The Elimination Diet can identify how certain foods are impacting your health. This framework can identify which foods are causing issues, if any, and formulate a plan to address them. Modern science has learned that food plays a tremendous role in our health. Many chronic conditions like fatigue, eczema, brain fog, arthritis, and irritable bowel syndrome have all been linked to food in some capacity. The Elimination Diet involves taking a carefully-planned approach to learning how different foods influence our body and our overall health feel. It can be tough—really tough—but many find the Elimination Diet capable of changing their lives forever. The Elimination Diet is designed to be a temporary diagnostic tool for better understanding personal health issues. It isn’t designed for long-term use and has the inherent risk of causing nutritional deficiencies. Contrary to most diets, this diet doesn’t recommend any certain types of food after the initial elimination phase. The Elimination Diet is best-described as a framework by which individuals can understand their optimal dietary routines better.
The Elimination Diet involves removing certain foods from your diet for a period. During this period your body goes through a type of withdrawal from the foods you commonly eat. This initial elimination period often results in the temporary disappearance of many symptoms like brain fog, allergies, bloating, heartburn, indigestion, upset stomachs, chronic fatigue, and diarrhea. The Elimination Diet itself is no cure for these types of symptoms, but it is an effective means to find out if the foods you eat are causing them. Modern science is quickly learning just how important food quality is to our long-term health. Any food has the potential to be causing you issues. Narrowing down your list of culprits will help save you time and money. Medical tests for food issues are expensive and often don’t tell the entire story. For example, you might not be allergic to wheat—but it could still be causing you issues. Allergen testing often misses this kind of connection, though it can be of serious consequence. The Elimination Diet is a safe and effective way to get a first impression of which foods may be affecting your health. It has two primary stages; eliminating common trouble foods, and then reintroducing them one by one to gauge your response.

Stage 1: Eliminating Foods

During the first stage of the Elimination Diet you’ll remove all foods that are commonly known to cause problems. These foods include cheeses, gluten, bread, sugar, soda, and all processed foods. Your body will go through a type of withdrawal from these foods—which can be tough. It’s important to stick to the Elimination Diet guidelines for four weeks—which is the time period research suggests that is needed to ensure effectiveness for everyone. This stage will reveal the effects of food on your health. This initial elimination state is a life-changing experience for many, but without further investigation, you won’t know
which foods are affecting your health. The second stage involves individually reintroducing foods to identify which ones are affecting you negatively.

**Stage 2: Reintroducing Foods**

The formula here is simple; reintroduce an eliminated food for a single meal and then go back to the Elimination Diet guidelines for three days. During these three days, you will see exactly how a single food affects your body from the time you eat it until the time you eliminate it. It's best to start with whatever food you are craving the most since it's likely the one that's affecting you the most also. Typically, you'll notice any negative effects from this food within the first three hours after eating, but it's important to wait for three days before you move onto the next food. Continue stage 2 until you feel confident that you've paired all your symptoms with specific food types. Most people find that after they reintroduce dairy, wheat, and then sugar that they've found the root cause of all their symptoms.

**Stage 3: Applying What You Learned**

The first two stages of the Elimination Diet are investigative—meant to learn new information about your body and dietary influences. A calculated diet plan is necessary to apply this newfound information effectively with the goal of becoming healthier and happier. For example, those realizing dairy as influential to their sinus congestion will likely want to continue avoiding foods such as milk, cheese, and some yogurts. Avoiding foods that are negatively impacting your health will allow your body time to recover and begin healing naturally. Please note, eliminated foods don’t necessarily need to *remain* eliminated. Many people find themselves able to reintroduce foods after several months of initial elimination. Other times, however, removing certain foods from a diet can end up making accidental exposure more pronounced. It’s recommended to work with a licensed nutritionist to help put together pieces of information gathered in stages one and two.
Elimination Diet Foods

Below you'll find a list separating 'good' foods and 'bad' foods to help guide you through the Elimination Diet. There are some special considerations to make depending on your circumstance, but generally-speaking; these guidelines work well for everyone. You'll be eliminating common trouble foods like wheat, dairy, processed foods, sweeteners, and alcohol. Caffeine should be eliminated as well, especially in the form of coffee. These foods are thought to be the most-common nutritional actors in many chronic health conditions like leaky gut syndrome, candida infections, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), eczema, and many more. Eggs, being commonly-regarded as non-troublesome foods, deserve a special mention. Most people that have issues with eggs have severe issues with eggs and are typically well-aware of them. For the most part, eggs are considered friendly enough to eat during the Elimination Diet and are encouraged as a good source of protein.

Grains & Breads

**NO WHEAT OR CORN**

All wheat products including bread, many types of cereal, and most baked goods like cookies are completely removed during the Elimination Diet. If you're still choosing to eat some processed foods, you need to pay extra-close attention to the labels to avoid wheat. Keep in mind, if you eat a *single serving* of wheat on the last day of your Elimination Diet —you will have to start over! Any products containing oats, barley, spelt, rye or gluten are to be avoided as well. All rice except 'wild' rice blends should be avoided, including brown and white rice. Acceptable grains include wild rice, quinoa, millet, and amaranth. Keeping a large pot of already-cooked rice can help you better resist cravings by avoiding long cook periods. There’s nothing worse than craving something to eat and having to wait 45 minutes for a pot of rice to finish cooking.
Dairy

**NO MILK, BUTTER, OR YOGURT**
Eliminate all dairy products including cottage cheese, cheese, yogurt, dairy kefir, butter, margarine, and even ghee. Eggs are not in the dairy category and are acceptable to eat while on the Elimination Diet unless you’ve specific knowledge of their negative impact on you. The Elimination Diet’s avoidance of dairy extends to non-bovine milk as well, such as goat's milk and even non-dairy nut milk like Almond milk, Soy milk, and Hemp milk. If you have sinus congestion, it’s likely you will find great relief from the removal of dairy from your diet.

Meats

**NO BEEF, PORK, OR DELI MEATS**
You should only eat organic, non-processed meats while on the Elimination Diet, while also eliminating beef and pork. This means no steak, burgers, bacon, pork chops, or sausage. The only meats that are allowed are chicken, turkey, certain fish, and wild-caught-game like deer and pheasant. Sandwich meats should be avoided as well even if they are on the approved foods list. This includes sliced ham, turkey, roast beef, and even sliced chicken. Canned meats like anchovies and Spam are also not allowed. Deli meats like pepperoni, salami, and other processed meats like hotdogs must be avoided as well.

Fruits

**NO CITRUS FRUITS (LEMON, LIME, GRAPEFRUIT)**
Small amounts of fruits are allowed during the Elimination Diet, but you should be mindful not to consume too much. Fruits provide great amounts of dietary fiber and antioxidants, but they are also high in natural sugars. If you are struggling with a bacterial or fungal infection like Candida, this could cause them to flare up. The only fruits that not allowed are citrus fruits like oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits because of their potential to increase histamine levels.
Vegetables

NO NIGHTSHADES (TOMATOES, EGGPLANT, TOMATILLOS, POTATOES)
Almost all vegetables are allowed on the Elimination Diet and are actively encouraged. The notable exception here is for vegetables in the nightshade family such as potatoes, tomatoes, tomatillos, peppers, and eggplant. These types of vegetables are known to cause issues like inflammation, particularly with certain blood types, and should be avoided for the entirety of your Elimination Diet. The notable exception is sweet potatoes. They are often considered a saving grace for those struggling to adhere to the Elimination Diet’s strict protocol. Make special note that corn cannot be eaten while on the Elimination Diet, nor can any products containing corn products such as high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS).

Nuts & Seeds

NO TREE NUTS OR SEEDS
The Elimination Diet requires avoiding all tree nuts and seeds including almonds, walnuts, macadamia nuts, cashews, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and especially peanuts (technically in the legume family). Two notable exceptions are Quinoa and Amaranth—both of which are technically seeds. A great many other seeds are floating around out there, but it’s best to assume that they are not allowed either. After all, the Elimination Diet isn’t about finding technical exceptions—it’s about finding answers!

Beans/Legumes

NO BEANS OR LEGUMES EXCEPT GREEN BEANS
Most beans are not allowed on the Elimination Diet, except great northern beans and green beans. This means no black bean burgers, refried beans, bean chili, and no Soy products whatsoever. Soy products such as tofu and meat-substitutes like soy must also be avoided while on the Elimination Diet.
Vegetable Oils

NO CORN SYRUP OR HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE OILS
Vegetable oils such as high fructose corn syrup, sunflower oil, safflower oil, and soybean oil are not allowed on the Elimination Diet. Cold-pressed oils like Organic Olive Oils, coconut oils, and avocado oils are allowed. Coconut oil is often the most recommended oil substitute since it is particularly well-suited for cooking. Coconut oil makes for a great butter/margarine substitute and is suitable to cook with at extremely high temperatures. If you don’t like the flavor of coconut, make sure you avoid ‘Virgin’ coconut oils—they have not been processed to remove the coconut flavor.

Drinks

NO ALCOHOL, COFFEE, OR SODAS
The vast majority of what you drink while on the Elimination Diet should be spring water. Avoid tap water like the plague—even if it’s been passed through a filter. Ideal drinking water comes from natural sources like wells, but many are forced to transition to buying bottled drinking water. There are very few filters that are capable of removing enough toxins from tap water to be considered acceptable under Elimination Diet guidelines. Additionally, the most effective water filters are often quite expensive. To add a bit of flavor to your water, many people enjoy slicing up cucumbers or adding a splash of apple cider vinegar to their drink. Absolutely no alcohol can be consumed during the Elimination Diet — this includes wine, beer, liquor and anything else you can imagine. Coffee and caffeinated teas like matcha, green tea, and black tea are also restricted. Many regard fermented drinks like Kombucha as being acceptable to drink during eliminations diets, but for ideal results, they should be avoided as well. These types of ‘functional’ beverages contain large amounts of yeast which is common trouble food.
Sweeteners

**NO SUGAR, HONEY, OR ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS**
Stevia is the only acceptable sweetener during the Elimination Diet, and all others must be completely avoided. These include honey, maple syrup, agave nectar, or any other natural compound that is high in sugar. Do not eat artificial sweeteners like erythritol, aspartame, sucralose, or saccharin during the Elimination Diet either.

Processed Foods

**NO PROCESSED FOODS**
In addition to the foods listed above, you should avoid any and all processed foods. You should plan on cooking your meals for the entire duration of the Elimination Diet. Many restaurants cater to the needs of restricted diets—but keep in mind that a single meal with an eliminated food can make you start all over again. If you’re serious about learning the lessons the Elimination Diet has to teach, prepare to avoid anything that comes wrapped in plastic.

Miscellaneous

**NO YEASTS, NO MUSHROOMS, NO VINEGAR**
There are some foods to avoid during the Elimination Diet that don’t necessarily fall into any single category. Anything with baker’s yeast should be avoided, including certain drinks like Kombucha or. As a rule, any cultured or bacteria-containing foods like yogurt, mushrooms, or foods with a strongly acidic pH like vinegar should be avoided as well. The notable exception to vinegar is apple cider vinegar, which is thought to provide an overall alkalizing effect.
Reintroduction Stage

After the four weeks are up, you should have an accurate picture of how food affects your body. It's also likely that you feel the best you've ever felt in your life, though you wouldn't want to eat like this forever. To get started reintroducing foods, you'll want to start with whatever food you're craving the most—for many this is either wheat or dairy. Absolutely gorge yourself on whichever food you choose, but only for a single meal. After you've eaten this meal, you should go back to the Elimination Diet guidelines for three days. Research suggests this is the length of time needed for a single meal to be entirely eliminated from your body. If you have issues with a certain food, you'll likely notice it immediately. The three day wait time is more to ensure a clean slate for the introduction of the next food. Adverse reactions to food can happen as many as three days later though—so pay close attention to any changes you notice in your mood, energy, and especially in irritability.

It's up to you how many individual foods you choose to test in the reintroduction stage. Remember that it's taken you four long weeks to get this opportunity. You'll benefit from testing the reintroduction of as many foods as possible. For certain, you want to test dairy, wheat, gluten, and sugar—as these are the usual suspects. After you've done these three, you might find that simply avoiding them is enough and that other restricted foods aren't having any remarkable impact on your wellbeing. When you've reached this point—it’s likely you’ll be forever-changed, never looking at food in the same light. The Elimination Diet is capable of transforming even the most-unhealthy eaters into genuine health nuts. After you've identified which foods cause the biggest issues for you, feel free to loosen things back up. Many different foods will cause you to react differently, but the elimination of any major food types that cause you issues will usually help reduce many chronic health symptoms. It may take months or years to truly see the cumulative benefits of avoiding certain food types.
What to Expect

The Elimination Diet impacts everyone differently. Everyone has different issues they’re dealing with; the foods that bother some people may not bother others. What is common among nearly everyone is an initial stage of withdrawal. For anyone who has ever quit smoking, drinking, or gave up an addictive substance—the withdrawal symptoms of the Elimination Diet are comparable.

Sugar Withdrawal & Mood Swings

Most withdrawal symptoms are rooted from eating a typical Western diet full of sugar and refined carbohydrates; your body, your gut-bacteria, and your brain are all used to getting mega doses of glucose and short-lived energy. Depriving yourself of these compounds will make you fiend for any source of sugar and carbs to satisfy your craving. Complex carbs like rice and millet will offer you some solace, but be prepared for the first week of the Elimination Diet to be very unpleasant.

Things Start Looking Up

After you get over the initial hurdle, things will start looking up. Around the 10-12 day mark most people start feeling remarkably better. Allergy symptoms start to disappear, bowel movements improve, and energy levels begin to rise. Detox-related headaches will lessen in their intensity, and may even. This period is when you'll start to catch your first glimpses of how deeply food impacts your daily life. This period of realization could, very appropriately, be named the Honeymoon Stage of the Elimination Diet. Before this stage, you've have been battling mostly with physical impulses and cravings for the foods that you've eliminated. Take a moment here to connect with the sense of making a positive change in your life and use that connection to help get you through the next stages.
Bargaining & Concessions

Not unlike the grieving process, the Elimination Diet can often bring about a period of mental bargaining. Sometime in the third week, you'll likely feel the best you've felt in years. You'll have passed the powerful physical urges to eat foods you've eliminated and you're body will begin to experience life with much less digestive and immunological burden. This period is when the mental hurdles start to appear. You'll find yourself rationalizing that just one cheat meal couldn't hurt. This concessionary thought couldn't be further from the truth—a single donut can ruin all you've accomplished to this point. This period during the Elimination Diet is when toxic compounds stored in your body's fat begin to get released. This process can release a variety of nasty things which can hit you pretty hard, depending on your previous diet. If you are really struggling here, consider taking supportive supplements like milk thistle, kidney aids, or activated charcoal. These supplements are supportive of our bodies’ natural detoxification pathways and will help reduce the overall stress of detoxification. Just remember—read the labels to ensure you’re not consuming any restricted foods! Having a licensed health professional to help guide during this time is recommended.

Brave New World

After you've come through all these stages of withdrawal and battles of self-obstruction—you'll be prepared to reintroduce foods. Reintroduction begins after the fourth week of the Elimination Diet. Be prepared to learn that your favorite foods may be giving you the most trouble. The Elimination Diet is a tough undertaking, but it's ultimately only a learning tool. Regardless of how much effort you put into sticking to its guidelines, you won't benefit without applying the lessons you've learned during the reintroduction stages. It's important to reintroduce the foods one at a time—and then let a few days pass. Doing this ensures you're able to gauge the effect of each one accurately. Documenting is important! Write everything down and come back to it in the future to help power through any cravings you may have for foods you no longer consume. The
Elimination Diet is one of the easiest and most effective ways to get some simple insight into personal health.

**Important Considerations**

The Elimination Diet eliminates broad ranges of foods like wheat, dairy, and sugar. While tacos, cheeseburgers, and fillet minion may all seem like vastly different choices for dinner—they really are just different combinations of these larger food groups. Each one is beef, dairy, and likely wheat depending on whether you choose tortilla shells over corn shells for taco night. To abide by Elimination Diet guidelines often means eliminating all those wheat, dairy, and sugar-filled meals. This dramatic change may be a physical, mental, and emotional shock for you and being aware of Elimination-Diet-friendly substitutes can help ease this transition. During this time you can expect detox symptoms, withdrawal symptoms, and hormonal shifts. The Elimination Diet is tough, but also remarkably effective. By planning ahead and making a few considerations beforehand, you can greatly increase your chances of success.

**Eat Good Food**

The Elimination Diet isn't designed to be a long-term eating plan. It's designed to free your body from as much burden possible, so you can quickly identify potential trouble foods. Before you begin eliminating specific foods like bread or beef, it's important to consider the quality of the foods you eat. Eating an organic grass-fed burger on an organic rye bun IS NOT the same as eating a Big Mac from McDonald's. You might regard both being only beef and wheat, but the truth is that commercial foods and processed foods contain tons of unlisted ingredients—many of which can be toxic. Many foods that people assume only contain meat actually contain meat, sugar, wheat, and dairy all rolled into one. During the Elimination Diet, it is recommended to cook your own meals and only buy whole food ingredients. Try to buy only organic foods, and avoid anything processed, boxed, or wrapped in plastic.
Meal Planning

The Elimination Diet will likely call for the removal of most of your favorite foods, and being prepared for as much can help ensure success. It's important to consider what types of meals you will choose to eat during this time. Breakfast is often a sugary, wheat-filled smorgasbord for many—washed down with a cup of caffeine and dairy. A typical breakfast on the Elimination Diet might include scrambled eggs cooked in coconut oil, slices of avocado, and a side of millet—all complimented by a nice ginger tea to help warm up your digestion. These types of changes can be difficult to manage on the fly, and it pays to have a few meals ready to go at a moment’s notice. Having these foods on-hand can help you power through cravings for sugary and wheaty foods. There's nothing more hopeless than trying to fight a craving for milk and donuts with rice—only to realize you have to wait 45 minutes for it to finish cooking. When you cook dinner, cook for the next day as well. Packing your lunch will also help avoiding being stuck somewhere without an Elimination Diet friendly meal. You can expect this diet to be very inconvenient, but also very powerful and worth your effort.

Snack Foods

Forget everything you know about snacks. A general rule of thumb is if you can buy it from a gas station; there is little chance it's allowable on the Elimination Diet. Fresh or dried fruit is usually the most popular choice for snacks, though you can get creative and eat anything on the allowed list. These snacks can include rice, eggs, carrots, and even bits of meat—though commercial jerky isn't allowed on the Elimination Diet because of high levels of non-meat ingredients like nitrates and sugar. Having snack foods on-hand can help you push through cravings for certain foods and can help lessen the overall inconvenience of the Elimination Diet on your lifestyle.
Cleaning Out Your Kitchen

Get rid of all the food you aren't going to be eating—throw it away if you have too. You want to treat yourself like the addict you are during the Elimination Diet. You'll be weak, you'll crave sugar and refined carbs, and you'll be much more likely to break your diet if you are faced with a box of donuts and jar of milk every time you open the refrigerator. If you have kids, a spouse, or maybe just roommates; it can be tricky to get rid of foods without having everyone commit to the Elimination Diet with you. If you live with several other people, it may be in your best interest to use a separate refrigerator during your diet (mini-fridges are cheap these days) and commit yourself to only using that fridge.

Supportive Supplements

During the Elimination Diet, your body will undergo a tremendous shift. You may experience hormonal changes, surges of energy, flu-like symptoms, headaches, dizziness, and even diarrhea. These are all normal, and a sign that your body is finally able to eliminate toxins that have been dragging it down. These symptoms can still be unpleasant, and there are a few types of nutritional supplements you can take to help make the process more bearable. As a general rule, you want to take as few supplements as possible during the Elimination Diet. This diet is all about removing foods from your diet, and supplements are much like very dense servings of food. If you do elect to use supplements—make sure you purchase from trustworthy brands and double check all the labels to make sure they don't contain any common allergens or ingredients not on the approved foods list. Useful supplements include activated charcoal (helps with detox symptoms), milk thistle (liver aid for detox), dandelion root (helps support kidney function during elimination) and any number of natural sleep aids like melatonin. Again, only take these types of supplements if you absolutely must—but know they may be able to help you get through the tough initial stages.
Prescription Medications

The goal of the Elimination Diet is to help isolate the causes of your chronic health symptoms. You may currently be taking medication for these symptoms, and you shouldn’t plan on stopping them during the diet. You should consult your prescribing doctor to let them know your plans, and see if they recommend any adjustments. The Elimination Diet isn’t a cure for anything, and will only provide you information. You will learn how food may be causing the symptoms that you are treating with prescription medications, and you can use that information to wean yourself from them. This process should not be done willy-nilly. You should only consider alterations of prescription medications under strict supervision and advisement from your doctor.

Family & Friends

You should expect that most people won't really understand what you're doing. They'll ask you why you don't just go to the doctor or tell you something they heard Dr. Oz say on television about 'alternative' medicine. Set yourself a strict set of mental rules to follow when communicating with friends and family during the Elimination Diet. You may also feel a bit unstable during this period as your body changes on a very fundamental level. Let your family know what you're doing, and apologize in advance for any short-tempered behavior they may experience. If at all possible, try to do the Elimination Diet with your spouse, roommate, or close friend. Having someone to share this experience with can make things so much easier and greatly improve your chances of success. You'll want to avoid tempting situations while on the Elimination Diet. It's best to let your loved ones know you won't be joining them at the bar or going out to eat with them for the next month—and it's nothing personal.
Final Considerations

The Elimination Diet is a powerful tool for self-diagnosis and discovering how food affects your body and mood. Many chronic health conditions are thought to be significantly affected by our diet. The foods that you are eliminating are among the most common culprits. Do not regard the Elimination Diet as a substitute for specialized food-allergen testing. It's merely one of the most cost-effective ways to discover how food affects your health at home. It should also be made clear that the Elimination Diet isn't well suited for long periods of time either, and such use will likely cause nutritional deficiencies. Moving forward with the foods you've chosen to eliminate for good should be done under the supervision of a trained professional such as a dietitian or nutritionist. These professionals can help you better understand how to maintain a healthy and well-balanced diet within the purview of your newly-defined dietary window.
About the Author

The Organic Newsroom is focused on producing content to discover and share the benefits associated with making healthy lifestyle choices. Their passion is rooted in their own personal journeys of overcoming chronic illness common to modern lifestyles. They endeavor to produce content based on the most recent scientific understandings of the interrelation of food, supplements and exercise to general health and longevity. The Elimination Diet was a catalyst of positive change for many of their team members, and has been shared here with an open heart, honest intention, and good will. To learn more about the Organic Newsroom, this article, and all things health, visit them on the web:

www.organicnewsroom.com