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

The Elimination Diet is a very mutable framework by which one can work to better understand 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 better understand the root cause 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 between the lots while undergoing this diet. It’s much like a detoxification program from modern Western Diet, and involves drastic changes for most participants. This guide serves as guide to the basic principles of the Elimination Diet, its variances, nuances, and likely outcomes. An updated version of this eBook can always be found 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 help isolate how certain types of foods may be impacting your health. By following its guidelines, many are able to identify which foods are causing them issues, if any, and formulate a plan to address the issue. 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 tied to food in some capacity. The Elimination Diet involves taking a carefully-planned approach to help you learn which foods influence your body and how your feel. It’s tough—really tough—but with just 4 weeks of effort many find they are able to change 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. Before considering the elimination diet you should talk with your doctor about the risks involved with it, and special considerations for your personal state of health, and any types of supplements that may help assist your endeavor.
Elimination Diet Protocol

The elimination diet involves removing certain foods from your diet for a period of time. During this period of time your body goes through a type of withdrawal from the foods you commonly eat. This often results in the temporary disappearance of many symptoms like brain fog, allergies, bloating, heart burn, indigestion, upset stomachs, chronic fatigue, and diarrhea. The elimination diet itself is no cure for these types of symptoms, but it is an effective way 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, and narrowing down your list of culprits can help save you time and money. Medical testing for food issues is expensive, and often doesn't tell the entire story. For example, you might not be allergic to a wheat—but it could still be causing you issues. The Elimination Diet is a safe and effective way to get a first impression on which foods may be affecting your health. It has two primary stages; eliminating common trouble foods, and then reintroducing them one by one to see how you respond.

Stage 1: Eliminating Foods

During the first stage of the Elimination Diet you'll remove all foods that are known to commonly cause problems from your diet. This includes things like cheese, gluten, bread, sugar, soda, and almost 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 4 weeks—which is the period of time research suggests that is needed to ensure effectiveness for everyone. This first stage will help to directly experience the effects of the food on your health. This is a life-changing experience for many, but without further investigation you won't know which foods affected you the most. The second
stage involves reintroducing foods to identify the specific foods that affect you negatively.

**Stage 2: Reintroducing Foods**

The formula here is to add back a single food, for a single meal, 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 it is eliminated. 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 as well. It's highly likely that you'll notice any negative effects from this food within the first 3 hours after eating, but it's important to wait for 3 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 the 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 academic in nature; meant to learn new information about your body and dietary influences. To harness the information you learn in these stages, it’s important to come up with a calculated diet plan to move forward with. For example, those realizing Dairy causes sinus congestion will likely want to keep avoiding foods such as milk, cheese, and some yogurts. Avoiding the foods that are affect one negatively can help to allow the body time to recover and start healing naturally without the burden of problem foods. The foods that are eliminated don’t necessarily need to remain eliminated indefinitely. Often, many find that periodic food reintroductions are handled better after certain foods have been avoided for several months. Other times however, removing certain foods from a diet can end up making accidental exposure even more pronounced. Working with a licensed nutritionist or dietitian to understand how to put together the pieces of information gathered in stages 1 and 2 can be invaluable, and is highly recommended.
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 own personal situations, but generally these guidelines work well for everyone. You'll be eliminating the most-common trouble foods like wheat and dairy, removing all processed foods, any sweeteners, and alcohol. Caffeine should be eliminated as well, especially in the form of coffee. These foods are known to greatly impact your health, and have been directly traced to many chronic health conditions like leaky gut syndrome, candida infections, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), eczema, and many, many more. Eggs deserve a special mention, as they are typically regarded as a non-troublesome food. Most people that have issues with eggs have severe issues with eggs and are usually already aware of them.

Grains & Breads

NO WHEAT OR CORN
All wheat products including bread, many cereals, 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. If you eat a single piece of wheat on the last day of your elimination diet—you could undo everything that you've worked to achieve. In addition, any products contain oats, barley, spelt, rye or gluten is to be avoided. All rice except 'wild' rice blends should be avoided, including brown and white rice. Acceptable grains during the elimination diet include wild rice, quinoa, millet, and amaranth. Rice will be your new best friend during the elimination diet, and having ample amounts pre-made can help you survive strong cravings for refined grains.
Dairy

**NO MILK, BUTTER, OR YOGURT**
All dairy products must be eliminated including cottage cheese, cheese, yogurt, kefir, butter, margarine, and even ghee. Eggs are not included in dairy, and are generally regarded as acceptable to eat while on the elimination diet. The avoidance of dairy while on the elimination diet extends to non-bovine milk as well such as goat's milk and even non-dairy nut milks like Almond milk and Soy milk. If you have sinus congestion there is a great chance 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 eliminating beef and pork. This means no steak, no burgers, no bacon, no pork chops, and no sausage. The only meats that are allowed are chicken, turkey, certain fish, and wild-caught game like deer. Sandwich meats should be avoided as well, even if they are on the approved foods list. This includes sliced ham, sliced turkey, roast beef, and even sliced chicken. Canned meats like anchovies and Spam are also not allowed. Deli meats like pepperoni, salami, and and other processed meats like hotdogs should 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 that to flare up. The only fruits that cannot be eaten are citrus fruits like oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits.
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, and eggplant. These types of vegetables are known to cause issues, particularly with certain blood types, and should be avoided for the entirety of your elimination diet. The notable exception is that sweet potatoes are allowable, and often considered a saving grace for many struggling to adhere to the elimination diets strict guidelines. Make special note that corn cannot be eaten while on the elimination diet, nor can any products containing corn syrups.

Nuts & Seeds

**NO TREE NUTS OR SEEDS**

All tree nuts and seeds are to be avoided including Almonds, Walnuts, Macadamia nuts, cashews, Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and especially peanuts (even though they are technically in the legume family). Two notable exceptions are Quinoa and Amaranth—both of which are technically seeds. There are a great many other seeds floating around out there, but it's best to assume that they are not allowed rather than considering if they are.

Beans/Legumes

**NO BEANS OR LEGUMES EXCEPT GREEN BEANS**

Most beans are not allowed on the elimination diet, with the exception of great northern beans and green beans. This means no black bean burgers, not refried beans, not bean chili, and no Soy products whatsoever. Soy products such as tofu and meat-substitutes like soy should also be avoided while on the elimination diet.
Vegetable Oils

**NO CORN SYRUP OR HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE OILS**
Vegetable oils like 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 with. It can make 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 oil—as it hasn't 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, and ever consider avoiding tap water that's been run through a filter. It's always best if you have access to natural water sources like wells, but most 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 accessible, and they are often very 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 should be consumed during the elimination diet—this includes wine, beer, liquor and anything else you can imagine. Coffee, and caffeinated teas like matcha tea, green tea, and black tea are also to be avoided. Many regard fermented drinks like Kobucha as being acceptable to drink during eliminations diets. These types of functional beverages contain large amounts of yeast—and are advised to be avoided as well.
Sweeteners

**NO SUGAR, HONEY, OR ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS**

Stevia is the only acceptable sweetener that can be used on the elimination diet, and all others should be avoided. This means do not eat honey, maple syrup, agave nectar, or any other natural compound that is loaded with sugar. Do not eat artificial sweeteners like erythritol or aspartame 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 own meals for the entire time you are on 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 that don’t necessarily fall into any one category, yet they should still be avoided. Anything with baker’s yeast should be avoided, and certain drinks like Kombucha or Mead should be avoided as well. As a rule, anything that harbors cultured growths like yogurt, fungal presences like mushrooms, or acidic pH like vinegar should be avoided. The notable exception to vinegar is apple cider vinegar, which is thought to provide an overall alkalizing effect even though it is extremely acidic in nature.
Reintroduction Stage

After the four weeks are up, you should have a great idea of how food was affecting your body. It's 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—probably 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. This is the amount of time generally regarded as needed for a single meal to be completely eliminated from your body. If you have issues with a certain food, you'll likely notice it immediately. The 3 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 3 days later though—so pay close attention to any changes you notice in 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 4 long weeks to get this opportunity, and you'll likely benefit from testing the reintroduction of as many foods as possible. For certain, you want to test dairy, wheat/gluten/, and sugar—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 effect on you. When you get to this point you'll likely 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'll take months or years to truly see the benefits of avoiding certain food types all together.
What to Expect

The elimination diet impacts everyone differently. Everyone has different issues they're dealing with, and the foods that bother some will not bother others. What is common among almost everyone however, is an initial stage of withdrawal. If you've ever quit smoking, quit drinking, or given up an addictive substance—the withdrawal symptoms of the elimination diet can be similar to those.

Sugar Withdrawal & Mood Swings

The issue comes 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 start looking up. Around the 10-12 day mark is when most people start feeling remarkably better. Allergy symptoms start to disappear, bowel movements become better, and energy levels begin to equalize. If you've been suffering from detox-related headaches, you'll likely notice those start lessening and even dissipating during this period. This is the time when you'll start to catch your first glimpses of the powerful affect food has over your health. Up until this point, you'll have been battling mostly with physical impulses and cravings for the foods that you've eliminated. Take a moment here to really connect to the sense of making a positive change in your life, and use that 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. Around the 3 week mark, 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. This is when the mental hurdles start to appear. You'll find yourself arguing that you've done so much work and feel so much better that just one cheat meal couldn't hurt. This couldn't be farther from the truth—a single donut can ruin all you've accomplished to this point. This is also the time where sometimes toxic compounds stored in your body's fat begin to get released. This can be any variety of random nasty things found in many commercial foods, and can hit you pretty hard depending on your previous diet. If you are really struggling here, this is a good time to consider taking supportive supplements like milk thistle, kidney aids, or activated charcoal. Having a licensed health professional during to help guide your through this time can be invaluable.

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. 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 accurately gauge the effect of each one individually. 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 eat. 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 is primarily focused on eliminating 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 aren't. Each one is beef, dairy, and likely wheat depending on whether you choose tortilla shells over corn shells for taco night. When you eliminate these foods from your diet, you have to continue to eliminate them for a long enough time for your body to get a break from them. This means all those wheat, dairy, and sugar filled meals are going to disappear—which will be physical, mental, and emotional shock for you. During this time you can expect detox symptoms, withdrawal symptoms, and hormonal shifts. The Elimination Diet is tough, but it's remarkably effective. By planning ahead and making a few considerations beforehand, you can greatly increase your chances of making it all the way through.

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 are only meat are actually beef, 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 that's been 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 hard 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. Pack your lunch so you don't get stuck somewhere and find yourself hungry enough to break your diet. 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. This can include rice, an egg, carrots, and even bits of meat—though commercial jerky isn't allowed on the Elimination Diet. Having some type of snack food can help you push through cravings for certain foods, and dried fruits are particularly effective at helping with sugar withdrawals.
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 buy 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. 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 potentially ween yourself from them. That isn't a process to be done willy-nilly, and you should only consider those steps 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 are going to be a disaster, and will feel like lashing out at people around you—often. Let your family know what you're doing, and apologize in advance. If at all possible, try to do the elimination diet with your spouse, roommate, or close friend you spend a lot of time with. Having someone else to share this experience with can make things so much easier, and will greatly amplify 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. Many chronic health conditions are thought to be massively affected by our diet. The foods that you are eliminating are among the most-common to cause health issues. The elimination diet shouldn't ever be regarded 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 any long periods of time. Restricting your diet as completely as this can cause major disruptions and 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. This type of professional 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 related to 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