



Understanding Trigger Foods

Adverse food reactions are frequently overlooked as a contributor to chronic health issues. Many people who experience adverse food reactions don't realize how badly they feel, or that particular foods are the cause, until the foods that trigger a reaction are removed from the diet. Such reactions can trigger mental, emotional, and physical symptoms, making them difficult to diagnose. Understanding common symptoms of these reactions is an important step in the healing process. The following table lists symptoms and conditions that can be associated with adverse food reactions.

Area of the Body	Possible Symptoms and Associated Conditions
Brain and Head	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Behavioral disorders, psychiatric disorders (which may include inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, defiance, anxiety, depression, disordered eating, etc.)■ Dizziness, lightheadedness■ Feeling faint■ Headaches■ Loss of consciousness■ Mood swings
Mouth, Nose, Throat, and Chest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Anaphylaxis■ Asthma■ Constriction and tightening of airways■ Persistent cough■ Rapid heartbeat■ Respiratory problems■ Runny nose or nasal congestion■ Sensation of a lump in the throat, making it difficult to breathe■ Sneezing■ Swelling of the lips, face, tongue and throat (or other parts of the body)■ Tingling or itching in the mouth■ Wheezing or trouble breathing
Abdominal Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting■ Indigestion■ Infertility, irregular periods■ Stomach pain, cramps■ Swelling
Limbs, Hands, and Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Weakness, numbness, pain■ Weak pulse
Skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Hives, rash, itching, or eczema■ Pale or blue coloring of the skin

Discovering which foods trigger your specific symptoms can be a frustrating process, but the knowledge gained will be beneficial to your overall health in the long run. While people can experience adverse reactions to many different foods, most reactions are caused by corn, eggs, fish, histamines, milk (and other dairy products), peanuts, red meats, shellfish, soy, tree nuts, wheat, and yeast. During the process of discovering which foods trigger your symptoms, your healthcare practitioner may suggest temporarily removing one or more of these foods, and possibly others, from your diet.

Because the eight foods listed above are often used as ingredients in processed foods, it's important to also eliminate foods that contain them. Processed foods containing one of the eight foods listed above are required to meet specific labeling requirements in the U.S. Thus, it's important to read labels while eliminating known or suspected food triggers. The table on the next page lists the eight most common trigger foods and some of the processed foods in which they are found.

It's important to remember that these foods aren't the only things to remove when avoiding trigger foods. Many other foods contain ingredients that are processed using the same equipment as common trigger foods. If those foods are contaminated during processing, they may also cause an adverse food reaction. Additionally, some cosmetics and personal care products also contain trigger foods as ingredients, and may also result in symptoms. To avoid an unexpected reaction, take care to read all labels thoroughly.

Trigger Food	Typically Found In
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Baked goods ■ Canned soups ■ Egg substitutes ■ Ice cream ■ Pasta ■ Processed or pre-made meat products (meatballs, meatloaf, etc.) ■ Salad dressings
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asian cuisine (many dishes contain fish-based stocks) ■ Caesar salad ■ Imitation crab products ■ Worcestershire sauce
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All dairy products ■ Baked goods ■ Canned tuna ■ Chewing gum ■ Protein powders ■ Sausage and other meats
Peanuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asian cuisine ■ Baked goods (cookies, cakes, pies, etc.) ■ Candies ■ Cereals ■ Marinades and sauces ■ Mexican cuisine ■ Peanut butter
Shellfish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fish stock ■ Imitation crab meat ■ Seafood flavoring (e.g., crab extract) ■ Sushi

Trigger Food	Typically Found In
Soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asian cuisine ■ Baked goods ■ Canned broths, soups ■ Canned tuna ■ Chicken nuggets ■ Energy bars ■ Infant formula ■ Nut butters ■ Peanut butter (low-fat) ■ Processed meats (e.g., hot dogs, sausage, etc.) ■ Vodka
Tree nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alcoholic beverages ■ Asian cuisine ■ Baked goods ■ Baking mixes ■ Breading ■ Sauces
Wheat (gluten)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Baked goods and baking mixes ■ Cereals, pastas, crackers ■ Hot dogs ■ Ice cream ■ Sauces

References

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