

Henry C. Sobo, M.D.  
111 High Ridge Road  
Stamford, CT 06905  
Phone: 203-348-8805  
Fax: 203-348-6398  
E-mail: [optimalhealth@optonline.net](mailto:optimalhealth@optonline.net)

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*Hidden Food Allergies*

You may have food allergies and not even know it! That's because typical symptoms that people identify as related to allergies, such as watery, itchy eyes, or sinus congestion, are just the tip of the iceberg. Many other effects of allergies are not as commonly recognized. As a result, people may not get the specific help that they actually need.

As a Doctor of Internal Medicine I see patients for all types of problems. When any patient first comes to the office, I will discuss that patient's health history with him/her. Frequently, the fact that patients suffer from allergies has never been considered.

These varied manifestations of allergies may cause people to seek care from different types of medical specialists. One person may see a neurologist for headaches when another person with the same underlying problem may see a gastroenterologist for diarrhea or constipation. What is the same in these very different situations is that food allergies may be the underlying factor which causes suffering in both of these very different cases. Consider yet another scenario. A person feels very fatigued and has gone to see his/her doctor and has been tested for a number of things the doctor knows may cause fatigue- for example, anemia or thyroid problems. The person is told that the tests prove that he/she is fine. It may be suggested that perhaps he/she is depressed and should be treated for depression which causes fatigue. What may not have been considered in this case is that a symptom such as general fatigue may also be due to underlying food sensitivities.

A very important point about food allergies is that the symptoms may be delayed in causing symptoms, and this is why it may not be something the doctor or their patient even considers. To be clear let us take the case of migraine headaches triggered by food sensitivities. The person who suffers from them has never noticed that the headache occurs after any particular type of food is ingested, because the headache does not begin immediately or even shortly after the food has been eaten. The response of the body is delayed and the start of the symptom may not be for many hours or even a couple of days.

Patients' doctors may not discover an individual's root cause of the symptoms observed for another reason. On occasion, when the possibility of food allergies has actually been addressed, what is commonly tested for in blood is called an IgE test. This test only reveals the type of allergy that causes immediate symptoms like hives, but not delayed symptoms. The most common symptoms, however, are the delayed type, and this test may mislead both doctor and patient to conclude that there are no significant food allergies.

Author and physician Marshall Mandell, M.D. estimated that "over 50% of the symptoms reported to a doctor in the daily practice of many doctors are the result of allergy and chemical susceptibility." Another author, Theron Randolph, M.D., is considered by many to be one of the leaders of the movement in medicine called "clinical Ecology" which increasingly recognized the effect of our environment on our health. His book, "An Alternative Approach to Allergies," was written in 1980. He reviews case studies regarding headaches, fatigue, joint pains, and depression, as well as other problems that he recognized as allergy-related. Other symptoms to be aware of can vary from skin rashes, to binge eating, to palpitations. A very recent issue of the national magazine Newsweek devoted its front cover to the subject of children's food allergies. This problem is becoming increasingly recognized, and the cited article focuses on the immediate type of severe allergy reaction that people are most frightened of. The more common day-by-day symptoms that can affect children, as well as adults, continues to be under-recognized.

In addition to the above symptoms, here are others that you should be aware may be food-related: Anxiety, irritability, hyperactivity, post-nasal drip, recurrent ear congestion, asthma, chest congestion, and skin problems are a few examples.

I have had the distinct pleasure of seeing symptoms that may have been going on for years relieved when the true underlying cause was discovered and treated. Some patients who feel that they have a "sensitive stomach," causing diarrhea regularly, find that they become free of this when the offending foods are identified and avoided. Others who feel they are "headache prone" and that stress is responsible find similar relief when the offending food has been identified and avoided. A simple and accurate in-office procedure can lead to making the proper diagnosis which affords the patient substantial relief.

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Dr. Sobo is a Medical Doctor practicing Holistic/ Nutritional Medicine in Stamford, CT. More information about natural hormones and about Dr. Sobo's practice can be found on the Internet at <http://drsobo.com>. Dr. Sobo's office phone number is 203-348-8805.

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