



## When Food Is The Enemy...

Heather Faulkner owns “**NTOLERANCE**” – a retail and on-line store in Pukekohe specialising in allergen free foods, especially gluten, nut and dairy free foods for people who suffer from allergies and/or intolerances. She is a Registered Nurse with first hand experience as she has Coeliac Disease – a gluten intolerance (found in wheat, barley and rye), and is also lactose intolerant. Heather is available to discuss and assist with food choices for those with special dietary needs, requests and questions.

A generation ago, a child with a **food allergy** was rare. Now, it's uncommon to find a school, preschool or playgroup that doesn't have a child with an allergy, and it is also much more common to find children affected by **food intolerances**. For more and more people, food is becoming a source of illness. Associate Professor Rohan Ameratunga – a Clinical Immunologist at Auckland Hospital has said there has been a significant increase in allergies in the last 20-30 years. Theories attempting to explain this increase are many and varied. It is now widely acknowledged that this is largely the result of the modern western diet, dense in highly refined and processed foods with multiple additives and preservatives to colour, enhance flavour and extend shelf-life. These foods are aggravating our digestive systems and confusing our immune systems, thus setting up responses producing the symptoms of allergies and intolerances.

A food allergy is an immune system over-response to a specific part of a food, usually a protein, which would ordinarily be harmless. An allergic reaction usually occurs within a very short time of ingestion. There is a widespread belief that food allergies are trivial when they can be frightening and life threatening. Symptoms may include runny nose, breathing difficulties, abdominal cramps, nausea, diarrhoea, headache, fatigue, convulsions, rash, hives, itching, swelling and anaphylactic shock – a severe reaction which occurs within minutes and results in death if untreated. Sometimes the reaction may be less obvious. In children it can be characterised by infantile colic, reflux, eczema, diarrhoea and failure to thrive.

Allergies can occur at any age and some people do “grow out” of them. Nuts, eggs, milk, wheat, soy, food additives, fish and shellfish cause most food allergies in humans. In children, the most common allergies are to

cows' milk and eggs, followed by soy, peanuts, tree nuts and wheat. If an allergy is suspected it is important to see your health care professional for an accurate diagnosis and prevention strategies.

The term “**allergy**” is often misused to describe uncomfortable symptoms experienced after eating certain foods. **Food “intolerance”** is an adverse reaction to food that is a chemical reaction initiated in the digestive system. Symptoms are often vague and can occur immediately or 24-48 hours later. A food intolerance cannot cause a severe reaction such as anaphylaxis. It can, however, cause extremely uncomfortable symptoms, varying between individuals. Many people have a food they avoid because of the uncomfortable consequences experienced after eating, eg. bloating, indigestion and wind. Food intolerances can also cause nervousness, palpitations, rapid breathing, headaches, migraines, irritable bowel syndrome, itchy skin, sweating, constipation and diarrhoea, runny nose, post nasal drip, wheezing and coughing and fatigue. On top of this, there are chemicals in foods which mimic hormones, and can therefore interfere with hormone balance (most commonly in women). Food intolerance may mimic other medical conditions and therefore it is important to get professional health advice.

There is an abundance of research confirming the effects of diet on children's nervous systems with increasing numbers of children showing behavioural disorders and learning difficulties. Remarkable improvements are achieved by changes to their diet.

### Case study (from Meryn Wakelin, Naturopath, Pukekohe)

“Craig was 10 years old when desperate parents brought him to me. He was developing a very bad reputation at school for violence, particularly in the playground. He was constantly in trouble in the classroom and had just been officially diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

I recommended allergy hair testing to identify any substances that he may have been intolerant to. The results were positive for peanuts, wheat, sulphites E221, E223, MSG and tomato.

We removed these foods and food additives from his diet for three months and added herbal and nutrient medicines. Within 1 week it was estimated his behaviour moderated by half. Within three weeks Craig was a different boy who had not had a fight in the playground for the last 7 days. He was well behaved and eager to learn. At three months his parents declared he no longer had ADHD and reintroduced small amounts of bread and tomatoes, continuing to avoid MSG and sulphites with their new understanding of how damaging these substances can be.”

An elimination diet, removing all suspect foods until there are no symptoms, followed by re-introducing foods one-by-one, and monitoring the response, is the gold standard of diagnosing an intolerance. This should be done under the supervision of a Doctor, Naturopath, Nutritionalist or Registered Dietitian to make sure adequate nutrition is maintained. This can be a tedious process but being symptom free is well worth it in the end. ■

# “ntolerance”

*‘ntolerance specialises in allergen free food - wide variety of products including MARX fresh baked goods, organic & vegan foods.*

*Heather is available to discuss dietary requirements, requests & queries.*



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