

Food Sensitivity Testing

Food sensitivity testing is one of the tools Naturopathic Practitioners use to assess health in our patients. In Naturopathic Medicine our goal is to find the **cause** of symptoms of illness and disease. Food sensitivities can increase as we age due to change in health, irregular immune response and poor digestive function.

Testing for Food Sensitivities

There are several methods of testing for food sensitivities.

1. Elimination Diet



Most people attempt a food elimination diet as an initial way of self-diagnosing food sensitivities. A hypoallergenic, anti-inflammatory diet is consumed for a set period of time (usually 6-12 weeks). All the most common allergenic foods are eliminated and the patient self-monitors for improvements in symptoms. Foods are re-introduced one at a time after the initial period of restriction. If symptoms arise on reintroducing the food then a food sensitivity is suspected.

Advantages: Promotes a general sense of well-being, high level of patient involvement in their health.

Disadvantages: Does not eliminate all potential sources of sensitizing foods. Requires compliance with a restricted diet for a period of time. Can be expensive (the cost of egg-free, gluten-free, dairy-free, organic food adds up quickly).

2. Electro dermal Food Allergy Testing



A machine is held by the patient and the electrical frequencies of food are tested against the body's reaction to those foods (the brain interprets the electrical signal and elicits a skin resistance response which is read by the machine).

Advantages: Painless. Children can be tested easily. A clear outline of food sensitivities and the severity of sensitivities is given. Foods do not have to have been consumed recently for valid results (although accuracy is increased if they have been consumed recently or are consumed frequently).

Disadvantages: Moderately expensive. Some practitioners do not accept the validity of the testing method. Test accuracy relies on technician proficiency.

3. IgG & IgA Food Sensitivity Testing via blood prick test.

A blood droplet test is analysed by a specialized laboratory to assess for IgG & IgA (immunoglobulin antibodies produced during an sensitivity response). IgG & IgA antibodies are produced for several hours or days after exposure to an allergen (which is one of the reasons why some symptoms of food sensitivity don't occur immediately after eating a food).

Advantages: Gives a clear outline of food sensitivities and the severity of the sensitivity. Tests for a wide variety of commonly consumed foods (from 96 to 300 foods). Only a small amount of blood is required for the test and preparation can be done in office or at home. Antihistamine use is permitted during the test.

Disadvantages: Can be expensive. Food must be consumed within **3 weeks** prior to the test for an accurate reading. Immunosuppressant drugs (cortisone, chloroquine and azothioprine) must not be used during the testing.

In my clinic I most commonly use the IgG & IgA food sensitivity blood test to assess for food sensitivities. Clinically I have found this test to accurately identify sensitivities and result a corresponding improvement in patient symptoms. I support my patient's ability to choose whatever testing they find to be ideal and can support that decision making process and help to develop a treatment plan, whatever the testing method selected.

Why is this testing different than that provided by my doctor, immunologist or allergist?



Most severe, immediate allergy symptoms are a result of **IgE** (immunoglobulin E) – responsible for Type I hypersensitivity reactions in which a food antigen attaches to an IgE antibody and results in an immediate, and potentially life-threatening, hypersensitivity reaction.

There is considerable evidence for IgE testing, but there is also abundant scientific evidence that **IgG & IgA** immunoglobulin testing is an important marker for food sensitivity testing. IgG and IgG-complexes are involved in **80%** of all food allergy or sensitivity reactions. IgG is involved in delayed immune responses which are more common in food intolerance.

What is the next step for food allergy testing?

Ask me to organise a food allergy profile test for your needs. I use a Melbourne based Pathology company called Nutripath and the results can take around 3-4 weeks to return. From these results, I will tailor make a solution to your specific allergen report.



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