

FOOD ALLERGY, INTOLERANCE, & COELIAC DISEASE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

FOOD ALLERGY

- An immune system reaction to a food (usually a protein).
- Even tiny amounts of an allergen can trigger a life-threatening reaction.
- Reactions can range from mild to life-threatening.

AFFECTED AREAS OF THE BODY

- **Skin** - itching, hives, rashes, eczema, redness or swelling, especially around the mouth, face and throat
- **Respiratory System** - sneezing, coughing, wheezing or hay fever-like symptoms
- **Digestive System** - stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- **Cardiovascular System** - dizziness and fainting



ANAPHYLAXIS

- A severe, life-threatening allergic reaction.



SYMPTOMS:

- Persistent cough
- Vocal changes
- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling faint or panicked
- Wheezing
- Racing heartbeat
- Clammy skin
- Collapse or loss of consciousness

IMPORTANT:

- A mild reaction in the past does not guarantee a mild reaction next time.
- Factors like asthma, alcohol, exercise, tiredness, stress, infections, and the amount of an allergen can all increase the severity.

FOOD INTOLERANCE

- Not an immune system reaction
- Usually caused by a problem with digestion.
- A person's body might not be able to properly break down certain foods.

SYMPTOMS:

- Bloating or stomach pain
- Wind and diarrhoea
- Tiredness, headaches, brain fog
- Skin issues or joint pain
- Vomiting or constipation



Symptoms are **not usually life-threatening**, but can last for days or weeks.

EXAMPLE:

Lactose intolerance - Unable to digest lactose (milk sugar).

Important note: Lactose intolerance is not the same as **milk allergy**. Milk allergy is caused by a reaction to the *protein* in milk.

Lactose-free milk still contains milk protein, and would not be safe for someone with a milk allergy.



COELIAC DISEASE

- Not an allergy or an intolerance.
- It's an autoimmune condition.
- When gluten is eaten, the immune system attacks the gut lining. This impacts a person's ability to absorb nutrients from their food.

Gluten is a protein found in cereals including wheat, rye, barley, spelt, oats and Kamut. Even tiny amounts can cause harm.

SYMPTOMS:

- Diarrhoea, bloating, wind
- Constipation or nausea
- Tiredness, brain fog, anaemia
- Skin problems, headaches, fertility issues

