

WHY A 30-DAY ELIMINATION DIET?

The 30-day elimination diet is designed to reduce inflammation, improve digestion, strengthen metabolism, identify food sensitivities, reduce allergic reactions, boost energy, regulate blood sugar and normalize weight. It is hard to do, but it is free, effective, and for a finite period of time. Food is powerful medicine. No other therapy - natural or otherwise - can come even remotely close to accomplishing all of these goals. There are different versions of the elimination diet, and this is a comprehensive one that is based on **principles of ancestral health** (looking at indigenous cultures and an evolutionary biology lens to maximize nutrient-density and reduce inflammatory foods).

It's essential that you commit to making these changes for at least 30 days - without cheating. Some experts recommend stretching it to 6 weeks if you can do that. By removing the foods that most commonly cause problems, you allow your body to rest and recover from whatever symptoms those foods have been provoking. Just one cheat could trigger a whole new cascade of reactions, so keep this month as clean as possible.

After the program, you may be able to re-introduce some of the foods on the "avoid completely" list, such as dairy (especially cream, butter, yogurt and kefir), white potatoes, white rice, alcohol (in moderation), white rice and buckwheat. But for now, it's best to eliminate these foods to see if they're causing problems.

WHAT FOODS CAN I EAT?

EAT LIBERALLY:

-- Meat and poultry-- Emphasize beef and lamb, but also pork, chicken, turkey, duck and wild game like venison, ostrich, etc. Organic and free-range is always preferable, but is especially so during this program.

-- Organ meats (especially liver)-- Liver is one of the most nutrient-dense foods. If you don't like the taste of liver, one good trick is to put one chicken liver in each cube of an ice cube tray and freeze them. Then, when you're making any meat dish, dice up one chicken liver and add it to the meat.

--Bone broth soups-- It's essential to balance your intake of muscle meats and organ meats with homemade bone broths. Bone broths are rich in glycine, and amino acid found in collagen, which is a protein important in maintaining a healthy gut lining. For information on how to make bone broth, visit <http://cynthialimd.com/nutrient-dense-cooking-basics-3-recipes/>.

-- Fish-- Especially fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, or sardines. Wild is preferable. You need to eat three 6 oz. servings of fatty fish per week to balance your omega-6 to omega-3 ratio.

-- Eggs-- Preferably free-range and organic **if you have significant autoimmune issues, best to eliminate eggs during the month-long trial, too.

-- Starchy tubers-- Yams, sweet potatoes, yucca, taro, etc.

-- Non-starchy vegetables-- Cooked and raw. Fermented vegetables and juices ideal. **Eating 5-8 servings a day, including dark leafy vegetables (these help boost your body's capacity to detoxify) and a rainbow color of vegetables is important.**

-- Healthy fats—Olive oil, avocado oil, ghee (clarified butter—this contains no casein or other milk proteins), coconut oil, palm oil, tallow, and occasional lard. These fats are considered traditional fats, and are minimally processed and have low oxidative properties. **Eat liberally.**

-- Olives, avocados and coconuts (including coconut milk). Some people may be sensitive to the guar gum used in canned coconut milk.

--Sea salt and spices.

EAT IN MODERATION:

-- Processed meat-- Sausage, bacon and jerky. Make sure they are gluten, sugar and soy free. Organic/free-range meat is preferable.

-- Whole fruit-- Approximately 1-4 servings per day, depending on your blood sugar balance. Favor low sugar fruits like berries and peaches over tropical fruits, apples & pears.

-- Nuts and seeds-- A maximum of a small handful per day, preferably soaked overnight and dehydrated or roasted at low temperature (150 degrees) to improve digestibility. Favor nuts lower in omega-6, like hazelnuts and macadamias, and minimize nuts high in omega-6, like Brazil nuts and almonds.

-- Green beans, sugar peas and snap peas. Though technically legumes, they are usually well tolerated.

-- Coffee and black tea-- Black, or with coconut milk. Only if you don't suffer from fatigue, insomnia or hypoglycemia, and only before 12:00 PM. Limit to one cup (not one triple espresso - one cup).

-- Vinegar. Raw apple cider vinegar is especially well tolerated.

-- Restaurant food. The main problem with eating out is that restaurants cook with industrial seed/vegetable oils, which generate inflammation. You don't need to become a cave dweller, but it's best to limit eating out as much as possible during this initial period.

AVOID COMPLETELY:

-- Dairy, including butter, cheese, yogurt, milk, cream & any dairy product that comes from a cow, goat or sheep. Ghee is allowed because all the proteins are removed from it.

-- Grains-- Including bread, rice, cereal, oats, or any gluten-free grains like sorghum, teff, quinoa, amaranth, buckwheat, etc.

-- Legumes-- Including beans of all kinds (soy, black, kidney, pinto, etc.), peas, lentils and peanuts. As noted above, green peas and snap peas are ok.

- Concentrated sweeteners, real or artificial-- Sugar, high fructose corn syrup, maple syrup, honey, agave, brown rice syrup, Splenda, Equal, Nutrasweet, xylitol, stevia, etc.
- Processed or refined foods-- As a general rule, if it comes in a bag or a box, don't eat it, including highly processed "health foods" like protein powder, energy bars, dairy-free creamers, etc.
- Sodas and diet sodas.
- Alcohol in any form.
- White potatoes, which are in the nightshade family and can cause inflammation in certain people.
- Processed sauces and seasonings-- Soy sauce, tamari, and other processed seasonings and sauces (which often have sugar, soy, gluten, or all of the above).

SPECIAL CONDITIONS:

With certain health conditions the basic program above needs further modification:

Those with **arthritis, autoimmune disease and severe gut issues** should also eliminate nightshades and eggs. Nightshades include potatoes, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, eggplant, tomatillos, pepinos, pimentos, paprika and cayenne pepper. Nightshades have compounds called alkaloids that can cause inflammation and worsen joint pain in susceptible people. Eggs contain proteins that are common allergens.

Those with insulin resistance, hypoglycemia or reactive hypoglycemia, and those wishing to lose weight, should limit fruit and starchy vegetables. The total amount eaten each day should equal roughly 400 calories per day of glucose, which is the amount contained in 2 servings of low-glycemic fruit (berries) and two servings of starch (i.e. sweet potato, taro, yucca, etc.). Keeping those rough portion sizes in mind is sufficient.

Those with **fatigue, insomnia, anxiety, mood swings or depression** should eliminate coffee, tea and all caffeine entirely (this means dark chocolate, too). Caffeine stimulates the adrenals and can worsen all of these conditions. Once your adrenal issues have been addressed, you may be able to add them back in moderation.

HOW DO I DO IT?

This will be a dramatic change for many of you. The best way is to do your homework before doing your elimination diet month. And set up a time frame during which you may have limited or reduced travel, or a time away from holidays or special occasions. PREPARATION is key to doing this successfully.

Copy the list of foods you can eat from above, and head to the grocery store, farmer's market, butcher or wherever you shop and stock up for the next week. All you have to do is think about what to eat and what not to eat. There are no calories to count, or special ratios to calculate or food combinations to consider. Just eat the foods that are allowed, and don't eat the ones that aren't.

WHEN WILL I GET RESULTS?

The first few days can be hard. Your body will be going through withdrawal. Sugar and wheat in particular are addictive and you may notice symptoms like mood swings, strong cravings, irritability and fatigue as your body adjusts to life without them.

But at some point, usually about a week into it, you will recover and start feeling better than you did before you began the program. Your energy may improve, your skin may clear up, your digestion may smooth out, your sleep may get deeper, your moods stabilize. Many will start shedding some pounds (only if you need to, usually). Aches, pains and mysterious symptoms like brain fog that you've had for ages - seemingly miraculously - often begin to improve.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON PITFALLS?

-- Cheating--During the 30-day period, ANY cheating may sabotage your results because it doesn't give your immune system time to calm down. It's not worth it. One piece of bread or one glass of milk could re-start the inflammatory process and throw your body back into the chaos that led you to this in the first place. If you can stick this initial period out, it will get easier.

-- Fat phobia-- The biggest mistake people make on this program is not eating enough fat. You're eliminating a lot of foods from your diet (bread, grains, beans, etc.), and you have to replace those calories with something. Healthy fat is that something. Fat doesn't make you fat. Food toxins like wheat, fructose and processed vegetable oils make you fat. Fat is the preferred fuel source of the body, and should constitute about 60-70% of calories.

-- Obsessing-- Try to relax into this as much as possible. Don't overanalyze what you're eating. Enjoy your food. Make cooking fun and leave time to savor your creations. Find some recipes that look good.

-- Lack of planning-- If you know you're going out to dinner with some friends this weekend, choose a place that can accommodate your needs. Call ahead and ask if they have gluten-free items on the menu. A lot of restaurants in the Bay Area are now friendly to food requests. Pick a place that has meat and vegetable dishes, and order a salad on the side. Don't put yourself in a situation where you're starving because you haven't planned in advance, and then eat a bagel with cream cheese because that's all that's available. If you're going on a road trip, stock up on paleo-friendly snacks. This is all possible, but it does require some planning and foresight.

-- Lack of support-- Making big changes is hard, and the more support you have in doing this, the easier it will go. See if you can enlist your spouse, significant other or a good friend to do this with you. They may not be eager to join, but they'll thank you later because they may feel better too. Invite friends over to cook with you. Connect with others online following this approach. Ask questions. Get help.

WHERE CAN I GET RECIPES AND TIPS?

Check out my resources page <http://cynthialimd.com/food-and-nutrition-links/> for weblinks. My Recommended Reading page has lots of great cookbooks to get you started: <http://cynthialimd.com/recommended-reading/>. I especially recommend "Practical Paleo" and "Longevity Kitchen" to get you started with life-long changes in more delicious and healthier eating for you and your family.

HOW DO I REINTRODUCE FOODS WHEN I AM DONE W/ THE 4-6 WEEK ELIMINATION PHASE?

After your 4-6 week period, you may slowly begin to reintroduce foods—ideally, one class by one class—every 3 days. You may then monitor whether or not you have any set backs or flare up of old symptoms, which can be anything from fatigue to sinus or throat congestion to bowel symptoms to aches or attention problems. If any of those symptoms develop, eliminate that food and move onto the next one. For those who are sensitive to gluten, dairy, and/or soy, generally it will be best to eliminate those forever. Best to consult with me once you are done with your elimination diet.