

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1995

TASTE

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Change what you eat to feel much better

Twenty-percent of Americans think they have food allergies. Experts say only 2 percent really do. Are the others just confused about what's really wrong? While the experts debate this issue, studies show that eliminating certain foods from diets of hyperactive children calms them down. If you suffer from ulcers, stop eating acidic foods, and you'll feel better.

The most common foods people are allergic to are milk, eggs, soy, strawberries and shell fish. When some people eat these foods their immune system mistakenly identifies the food as a harmful substance, and begins its attack.

The immunoglobulin produced stimulates the production of histamines and other substances, which in turn cause reactions ranging from sneezing and tongue sensitivity to asthma or hives. The worst cases can result in shock.

As for the other 18 percent - those who do not immediately react to food with classic allergy symptoms - experts say they probably suffer from gluten enteropathy (the inability to tolerate gluten in wheat, rye, oat, barley and other grains), or lack sufficient quantities of enzymes needed for digestion.

People who claim to have food allergies, but show no visible immune system response, could be suffering from stress.

Stressful living

Practitioners of environmental medicine blame the very basis of civilization for our modern ills. Our ancestors did not eat the same things every day because they couldn't.

Animal species passed through regions depending on migratory patterns. Flowers and grains bloomed at different times of the year. Problems began when we learned to how to grow and store grain and domesticate animals.

These days, we tend to eat the same foods and types of foods everyday. The result - with no extended break from many foods, we develop sensitivities to the things we eat most often. All this is fine and dandy and somewhat informative, but what can the person who claims to suffer from food allergies do to help alleviate the problems associated with a food allergy?

What to do

The only solution is to stop eating foods that you suspect are making you sick. If symptoms persist there are allergists, clinical ecologists and immunologists. But remember, they differ in their ideologies and methods of treatment.

Before contacting a specialist, keep a detailed food log indicating everything you eat for at least 14 days. Note any specific symptoms or problems that occur when eating the foods. Should you choose to search out an allergist, ask for a referral from a local medical center or your family physician.

Look for an allergist who specializes in food. Food allergists can identify problem foods through testing, and might possibly prescribe injection therapy thereby allowing some patients to eat their problem food on a rotational basis.

Practitioners of environmental medicine, also known as clinical ecologists, say that ordinary chemicals in our environment make us sick; everyday foods can be toxins and contaminated food can be linked to such diverse conditions as depression, heart disease and arthritis. For a referral, contact a doctor specializing in holistic medicine or talk to the owner of a health food store.

Referrals to an immunologist can be obtained from an allergist.

There are also support groups that meet throughout metropolitan Detroit that offer innovative menus, recipes and a list of practitioners.

Contact your local hospital's director of patient information for a list of contact people. Many hospitals sponsor monthly meetings. Magazines like "Eating Well" and "Prevention," often offer helpful information.

If you think you're suffering from a food allergy, help is available for the asking. Do it today.

See Larry Jones' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a voice mail message for him dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1888.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

■ Vignier is a white grape with an attitude.

■ Three emperors dinner fit for mere mortals

SUPPORT GROUPS

There are many organizations that offer support to those with food allergies or Celiac Sprue. Here are some of them:

The Southeastern Michigan chapter of the Food Allergy Network will meet at 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 24, at the Arbor Health Building, 990 W. Ann Arbor Trail (between Harvey and Main Street), Plymouth, when allergist Dr. Michael Rowe will talk about anaphylactic reactions; and at 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 22. For more information, call Anne Russell at (313) 420-2805.

The Tri-County Celiac Sprue Support Group's next meeting is at 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 8, when a panel of chefs from the Greater Detroit Restaurant Association talk about "Place Your Order" at Southfield Presbyterian Church, 21575 W. 10 Mile Road, Southfield. The group has also scheduled a potluck picnic for Sunday, June 25, at Kensington Metropark. The contact number for that group is Marsha Campbell at (810) 477-5953.

The Celiac Sprue Association/United States of America, Inc., can be reached at P.O. Box 31700, Omaha, Neb., 68131-0700. (402) 558-0600.

National Institutes of Health is at 9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Md., 20892.

The Food Allergy Network national headquarters, 4744 Holy Ave., Fairfax, Va., 22030-5647. (703) 691-3179 or fax (703) 691-2713.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, 1125 15th St., NW, Suite 502, Washington, DC 20005. (202) 466-7643 or fax (202) 466-8940.

White Rice Flour Milled from polished white rice, this has a bland flavor and is often combined with another gluten-free flour. Finely ground white rice flour gives more lift to baked products. 7/8 cup rice flour equals one cup of wheat flour.

Brown Rice Flour A bran-flavored flour milled from the unpolished rice, it is high in nutrient value and good for baked goods where bran flavor is desired. 7/8 cup brown rice flour equals one cup of wheat flour.

Rice Bran This is obtained from polishing brown rice and is sometimes added to cookies, muffins and some breads. It rates high in minerals, vitamin B & E, protein, and fiber.

Sweet Rice Flour Made from "sticky rice," it is a good thickening agent for sauces that are to be refrigerated or frozen because as it inhibits separation of the liquids.

Rice Polenta This is a soft, fluffy, cream-colored flour made from the hulls of brown rice. It causes muffins, breads and cakes to be lighter. Like rice bran, it has a high concentration of minerals and B vitamins.

Potato Starch Flour A very fine white flour with a bland taste, excellent for baking when combined with other flours. This is also a good thickening agent for cream soups but it must be mixed with water first, and you should use about half the amount you would need of a wheat flour. Potato starch flour produces better baked products than potato flour. 5/8 cup potato starch flour equals one cup of wheat flour.

Potato Flour This is a heavy flour with a definite potato taste. It can often be replaced with Potato Buds or mashed potatoes.

Tapioca Flour A very light, white, velvety flour obtained from the cassava root, this gives a bit of "chew" to baked goods such as English muffins, French bread, and pizza crusts.

Soy Flour A yellow flour having high protein and fat content, this has a nutty flavor. 1/2 cup soy flour plus 1/2 cup potato starch flour, or 1/2 cup soy flour plus 1/2 cup potato starch flour equals one cup of wheat flour.

Cornstarch A refined starch obtained from corn. It's good for thickening puddings and fruit sauces.

Corn Flour A flour milled from corn, this can be blended with cornmeal when making cornbread and corn muffins. 1 cup corn flour equals one cup of wheat flour.

Xanthan Gum A powder milled from the dried cell coat of a microorganism called *Xanthomonas campestris* grown under laboratory conditions. Baked goods that include xanthan gum hold together better and do not have a grainy texture.

Guar Gum A powder derived from the seed of the plant *Cyamopsis tetragonoloba*. Be aware, however, that it is sometimes used as a laxative and it can cause distress to some people whose digestive systems are sensitive.

-From "The Gluten-Free Gourmet" by Beebe Wagner, and the Tri-County Celiac Sprue Support Group

Food does wacky things to some people



ILLUSTRATION BY TAMIKE GRAYES

Thousands of people suffer from food allergies, or other diseases where the body mistakes certain foods for foreign particles. Local groups help families cope by providing emotional support, and recipes.

By CHRISTINA FOODO STAFF WRITER

Going to a professional sporting event seems like a pretty harmless family activity. But for 7-year-old Michael Russell of Plymouth, it can be deadly. Michael's allergy to peanuts is so severe that the dust from the nuts could put him into a severe - and potentially deadly - shock.

"We can't go to Tiger Stadium or Joe Louis Arena where they sell peanuts. (People) throw peanuts at each other and Murphy's Law would say that the peanuts would be thrown at my son," said his mother Anne Russell.

Michael is one of thousands of people who suffer from food allergies, or other diseases where the body mistakes certain foods for foreign particles.

Allergies are different from intolerances, according to Dr. Michael Rowe, an allergist who practices in Novi. Allergies are caused by specific types of antibodies formed against the food, while an intolerance means the body doesn't get along with the food. "It's not usually associated with life-threatening illness," he said. Michael Russell doesn't even have to eat peanuts to make him ill.

Smelling or touching them can put him into anaphylactic shock during which his throat or bronchi can swell, or blood pressure may drop. He could also lose consciousness or die. According to the National Institutes of Health, about 50 anaphylactic cases per year end in death.

When her son was an infant, Russell recognized Michael's eczema as a sign that he may have food allergies. So she avoided feeding him the most allergenic foods to children - peanuts and other legumes, chocolate, eggs, milk and soy - until he was 18 months old. (Adults react primarily to shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts such as walnuts, fish and eggs.)

Still, the former pediatric nurse at the University of Michigan hospitals, learned the hard way. "I let him have some scrambled eggs and he went into hives about a half hour after he ate them. The same with chocolate milk."

His most severe reaction came about a year later when she gave him his first taste of peanuts.

"At age 3/4, I gave him a lick of peanut butter for the first time and he went into immediate anaphylaxis and nine minutes after he had a lick of peanut butter he was in the

See ALLERGIES, 2B

HELPFUL TIPS

I can be frustrating dealing with food allergies or diseases like Celiac Sprue. Here are a few tips from the Tri-County Celiac Support Group and the Southeastern Michigan chapter of the Food Allergy Network.

- Always wear a Medic-Alert bracelet and fill out emergency care cards.

- Talk with the servers or, if possible the chef, at restaurants and explain your condition to them. Many of them will be cooperative and even welcome the challenge of cooking an allergy-free or gluten-free meal. Some restaurants let Celiac bring in their own pasta.

- The presence of peanuts, soy and other allergens can send a child into shock. Make sure homes, restaurants and other places the child may visit are free of these foods.

- Make sure that friends and families of those with anaphylaxis carry emergency medications at all times.

- Inform teachers, the school nurse and principals of your child's condition. If your child has Celiac Sprue, provide the school with gluten-free snacks and crafts. Neon stickers placed on lunchboxes, and school files indicating allergies or Celiac Sprue can be especially helpful.

- Use self-sticking postage stamps or a damp sponge to adhere them to an envelope if you have Celiac Sprue.

- Call airlines or train services ahead of time to order a special meal. Bring your own snacks with you.

- Try to cook most of your meals at home.