

# **Elimination Diet: Overview and Step-by-Step Plan**

## **What is an Elimination Diet**

An elimination diet is a short-term, structured eating plan designed to identify foods that may be causing inflammation, digestive issues, skin problems, fatigue, headaches, or other chronic symptoms. By removing common allergens and irritants for a set period and reintroducing them one by one, you can pinpoint exactly which foods your body reacts to.

## **Why is an Elimination Diet Helpful**

An elimination diet can help:

- Reduce inflammation
- Improve digestion and bowel regularity
- Clear skin issues such as acne or eczema
- Reduce bloating and abdominal discomfort
- Improve energy, focus, and mood
- Identify hidden food intolerances or sensitivities
- Support healing of the gut lining
- Reduce headaches and migraines
- Improve autoimmune flare-ups

Many people discover that eliminating certain foods dramatically changes how they feel within just a few weeks.

## **Foods to Eliminate (Common Allergens & Irritants)**

For the duration of the elimination phase, remove the following:

### **Major Allergens**

- Gluten
- Dairy
- Soy
- Eggs
- Corn
- Peanuts and all nuts (if severe sensitivity is suspected)

- Shellfish
- Fish (optional, unless suspected sensitivity)

## **Irritants and Inflammatory Foods**

- All added sugars
- Artificial sweeteners
- Alcohol
- Caffeine (optional but recommended to reduce masking symptoms)
- Seed oils (soybean, canola, corn, sunflower, safflower)
- Nightshades (examples: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, potatoes – especially if you have been diagnosed with Hashimoto's)
- All processed foods

## **What You Can Eat**

Focus on whole, simple, nutrient-dense foods:

- Fresh quality meats and poultry
- Wild-caught fish (if not eliminating)
- Vegetables (except nightshades if removed)
- Fruits (low sugar)
- Gluten-free grains (rice, quinoa, millet)
- Healthy fats (olive oil, coconut oil, beef tallow, organic butter)
- Fresh herbs and spices (avoid spice mixes with additives)
- Bone broth (ideally homemade)
- Herbal teas (opt for organic here – tea is heavily sprayed with pesticides)

## **How Long Should the Elimination Phase Last**

A proper elimination phase usually lasts:

► **21 to 30 days**

This length is important because:

- It takes time for inflammatory symptoms to quiet down
- Antibodies related to food sensitivities need time to decline
- The gut lining needs time to repair

If symptoms are severe or longstanding, some people benefit from extending this to 6 weeks.

## **Common Difficulties (and How to Handle Them)**

### **1. Cravings**

Normal during the first week as your body adjusts

→ Drink more water, increase healthy fats, and ensure enough protein.

### **2. Low energy**

Common in the first 3–5 days

→ Eat balanced meals with protein, vegetables, and fats.

### **3. Social pressure**

Eating out becomes harder

→ Choose simple dishes (meat + veggies), ask for no sauces, and plan ahead.

### **4. Emotional attachment to food**

Food habits often run deep

→ Remind yourself this is temporary and designed to give you clarity and healing.

## **Reintroduction Phase (The Most Important Part)**

Reintroduction helps you identify exactly which foods cause issues.

### **General Rules**

- Introduce one food at a time
- Allow 3 days per food
- Start with foods you miss most or believe are least problematic
- Keep the rest of your diet unchanged
- Try the food 2–3 times in one day, then stop for the remaining days

## **How to Reintroduce**

### **Day 1:**

- Eat a small amount of the food in the morning
- If no reaction after 4 hours, eat a moderate amount
- If still fine, eat a normal portion in the evening

### **Days 2–3:**

- Do not eat the food again
- Carefully observe symptoms
- Watch for Reactions:

Bloating or gas  
Headaches  
Fatigue  
Brain fog  
Skin changes (acne, rashes)  
Joint pain  
Mood shifts  
Digestive discomfort  
Sleep disturbances

If symptoms appear, remove that food again — it is likely a sensitivity.

If no symptoms appear after 3 days, the food is generally safe to include long-term.

## **Suggested Food Reintroduction Order**

- Eggs
- Nuts
- Legumes (beans, chickpeas, peas)
- Gluten-free grains with potential issues (corn)
- Dairy (start with yogurt, then cheese, then milk)
- Soy
- Gluten (last, because it is the most reactive)

## **Exercise Recommendations During the Elimination Diet**

During the elimination phase, your body is adapting to a new way of eating, and some individuals may notice changes in energy levels. Exercise is beneficial, but it should be moderate and mindful:

- Focus on low- to moderate-intensity workouts such as walking, cycling, swimming, or light resistance training.
- Avoid overly strenuous exercise during the first 1–2 weeks, especially if you feel fatigued or your energy is lower than usual.
- Listen to your body — rest is just as important as movement.
- Hydrate well and ensure you are consuming enough protein and healthy fats to support recovery.
- High-intensity or long-duration workouts can be reintroduced gradually after your elimination phase, once your energy and digestive function stabilize.

This approach helps your body focus on healing, digestion, and energy stabilization rather than being stressed by intense training.

## **Managing Common Symptoms During the Diet**

During the elimination phase, it's normal to experience temporary symptoms as your body adjusts. These reactions are often signs of detoxification, changes in hormone balance, or shifts in gut microbiota.

### **1. Skin Breakouts**

- Small pimples or rashes may appear in the first 1–2 weeks.

This is often a sign that the body is clearing toxins.

Support your skin by:

- Staying well-hydrated
- Ensuring sufficient healthy fats (avocado, olive oil, coconut)
- Eating plenty of vegetables rich in antioxidants
- Avoiding picking or irritating the skin

## 2. Headaches

Headaches can occur due to changes in caffeine intake, sugar withdrawal, or electrolyte shifts.

Simple ways to manage:

- Increase salt intake (e.g., Celtic Sea Salt in your water, on meals or bone broth) – don't be afraid of salt, we have been taught to fear it, but there's no reason to. Quality salt like Celtic Sea Salt is essential to human life, and supports your electrolyte balance. It does NOT cause hypertension, unless you choose table salt.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, but please don't add common electrolyte products as many of them contain artificial flavors, color additives, citric acid etc.
- Rest and reduce intense physical activity during the first few days

Remember: These symptoms are usually temporary and should subside as your body adapts to nutrient-dense, whole foods.

## Summary

An elimination diet is one of the most reliable ways to uncover hidden food sensitivities. By removing common allergens for 3–4 weeks and reintroducing them one at a time, you gain clarity, reduce inflammation, and help your body heal at a foundational level.

If you are aiming to lose weight during this time, I highly recommend cutting out ***all grains***. Go low carb/no grain for the duration of the elimination diet, and see your body transform in a short period of time.