Food Allergies

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One of the most common lab tests we run in our office, aside from conventional blood counts and metabolic testing, is "food allergy" testing. I wanted to take this opportunity to explain more about food allergies, how they are tested and why we do so much food allergy testing in our office.

To start, I'd like to make a distinction between a few different types of food reactions. There are many ways that we can react to food that are not considered allergies. Lactose intolerance, for example, is caused by a lack of the enzyme that digests milk. Spicy foods commonly cause heartburn or other reactions and this isn't always due to an allergic response, but may be considered more of an "expected outcome" of the capsaicin in the food which is universally irritating to the mucus membranes. The term food "sensitivity" can be used to describe any type of food reaction, but I typically use it to describe reactions people know they have, but for which no mechanism has been defined.

Allergies, on the other hand, are defined as "a damaging immune response by the body to a substance." In conventional medicine, this has come to encompass many different symptoms from hay fever to anaphylactic reactions, but is usually defined by the presence of a specific type of immune antibody, called IgE. IgE reactions are fairly well understood and often occur very quickly after exposure to the offending substance, or allergen.

The body has several other types of antibodies that it produces as well, including IgA and IgG. The development of these antibodies is an immune mediated responses to food substances and are commonly called food allergies, but may not be considered a "true allergy" by some as it is not IgE mediated and do not usually have the potential for development of anaphylaxis.

If IgA and IgG mediated reactions to foods don't usually have the potential to cause anaphylaxis, you might wonder why we test them so commonly. IgA and IgG mediated food reactions have multiple possible effects, including direct action on the gastrointestinal tract and systemic effects. These types of food allergies have been implicated in celiac disease, heartburn, IBS, arthritis, migraine headaches, fibromyalgia, depressed immunity, fatigue, seasonal allergies (hay fever) and many other conditions, particularly those that are associated with inflammation.

In my clinical experience, elimination of food allergens is a powerful tool that has resulted in reduction of symptoms and improvement in quality of life for many of my patients. In our office, we can test for IgA, IgG and IgE antibodies to a variety of foods and inhalants (airborne allergens like pollens) and the testing we recommend may vary depending on your symptoms. If you are interested in learning more about food allergies, please visit our website at **www.TrueHealthMedicine.com** to read more.

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