

Module 4, Lesson 1 Handout: **Elimination Diet**

Elimination diets are used with clients who are trying to get to the bottom of an issue. Is the stomach upset due to an allergy? Are the hives from food? Is that reflux coming from tomatoes? Are the bouts of diarrhea from milk? Is the gassy feeling and bloating from something eaten at lunch? Most people are at the end of their rope by the time they come in for help and have tried several things to figure out what or where their discomfort is coming from before they even meet with me. They've got some idea of what the underlying cause is, but scratch their heads that wine has aggravated their symptoms before but didn't seem to bother them on their anniversary. What's the deal? Can you help? Yes, you can! Before you begin, consider this:

1. There is no ONE elimination diet. You'll need to customize each elimination diet based on what you learn from your intake and your client's needs. For example, if you have a client who is trying to determine if he is gluten sensitive, you may choose to only eliminate gluten. If your client is trying to determine where reflux is coming from, you may want to exclude many more things. When you go in an elimination direction, you will need to customize what, how and when you are eliminating the suspected trigger foods (there is no one size fits all handout).
2. Plan to have your client follow the chosen elimination diet for 4 weeks. Food journals are a must during this period.
3. There is no typical response. You'll eliminate all suspicious foods and make sure your client is symptom free before adding foods or ingredients back into the meal plan. Just like what you eat today doesn't show up on the scale tomorrow, what you eat today may also not cause a reaction immediately. Allow 2 - 3 days between introducing each new food.
4. We are trying to get to the bottom of a mystery here. While on the elimination diet, it's best if all foods are prepared at home. Your client will want to prep foods at home as much as possible versus going out to a restaurant or prepared food market, to reduce the risk of cross contamination and to increase confidence that the food being eaten is "clean."
5. Elimination diets are not intended for weight loss, though your clients may lose weight because of how restrictive the eating can be.
6. Encourage your clients to buy local and organic as much as possible while on the elimination diet. Meats should be grass fed, organic and fresh.

Where to Start First, eliminate all:

- Processed foods (things that come in packaging and have multiple ingredients, additives, coloring and artificial ingredients)

- Processed meats: cold cuts, canned meats & fish, hot dogs
- Processed grains: bread, pasta, cereals, muffins, rolls, bars
- Processed fats: salad dressings, sauces, mayo
- Food dyes and food additives
- Juice
- Caffeine (wean slowly to avoid side effects)
- Alcohol
- Dairy and eggs
- Shellfish
- Grains: wheat, spelt, kamut, corn, barley, rye, triticale, oats
- Beans and legumes
- Soy and soy products
- Nuts
- Vegetables: tomatoes, peppers, spices, eggplant
- Refined sugars: corn syrup, white sugar, brown sugar, agave, candy & dessert
- Fats: butter, margarine, blended oils, dressings

Now what? Outside of a hospital setting, it is extremely rare that you would need to eliminate ALL of the above, but if you have a client in true distress, go ahead and make a meal plan with the foods on this list. I recommend offering two choices for each meal and a few snack choices.

Include the following:

- Fruit: fresh, frozen, unsweetened
- Rice milk in place of dairy
- Grains: rice, quinoa, millet, potato, amaranth, buckwheat
- Lean protein: fresh, organic, grassfed, beef, chicken, fish (no shellfish), turkey, pork, lamb
- Nut alternatives: coconut, flax, sunflower, pinenuts
- Fats: olive oil (look for cold pressed), ghee
- Vegetables: all, roasted, fresh, juiced, steamed (even though all vegetables are allowed, consider limiting cruciferous veggies if symptoms include gas and bloating)
- Seasonings: vinegar, salt, pepper, and herbs

Sample Meal Plan

Breakfast:

1. Cream of rice cereal prepared with rice milk or water, 1 cup blueberries, 2 teaspoons flax meal

2. Open-faced green apple sandwich with 2 teaspoons homemade sunflower butter and 3/4 cup puffed rice cereal

Lunch:

1. Homemade beef, chicken or bone broth soup with vegetables and 4 ounces unprocessed lean protein
2. Lettuce wrap with avocado, carrots, cucumber and 4 oz roasted chicken

Dinner:

1. Steamed vegetables, such as zucchini, carrots, green beans and spinach with 4 oz unprocessed, lean protein and a small sweet potato with a teaspoon of ghee or coconut oil
2. Roasted stuffed pepper (stuffed with 4 oz unprocessed, lean protein, quinoa and vegetables)

Snack ideas:

- 1/4 cup coconut flakes and 1/2 grapefruit
- Steamed vegetables with 2 teaspoons olive oil or 1/3 avocado
- Artichokes canned in water and 3 oz roasted turkey
- 2 teaspoons sunflower butter and crudites

**If your client has a medical diagnosis or is taking medication, you need to consider drug-nutrient interactions. In this case, do not implement an elimination diet without physician consent. Also, if you suspect an eating disorder, an elimination diet probably isn't the best way to go. Consider referring to a professional who specializes in working with eating disorders.*

What's Next?

Have your client follow the above plan for about four weeks (or until symptoms diminish), then start gradually adding suspect foods back into the diet. Allow 2-3 days between each new food introduction and only add one food at a time. If there are no symptoms after three days, that food can be deemed safe and can become part of the client's regular diet. Then try again and reintroduce another food. While these diets can be tedious and difficult to follow, they've been proven to help pinpoint issues and relieve symptoms in certain populations. A study found that following a 6-food elimination diet (removing milk, eggs, wheat, soy, peanuts, and fish/shellfish) is an effective way to treat eosinophilic esophagitis in both children and adults. Another study found elimination diets to be helpful in identifying food sensitivities in adults with IBS. While every client will have a different experience, this protocol has been shown to bring serious relief.