

KEEPING A DIET DIARY

Food allergies are the most common sensitivities in children, and most children who are allergic at all have some problem with foods. Tracking down food allergies must begin with careful record keeping in order to discover which foods are most likely to be causing problems. This is accomplished by keeping a diet diary. It should list everything your child eats or drinks, his/her activities and environmental conditions, and all symptoms associated with each entry.

Step one is the baseline diet diary, which is kept while feeding your child as you usually do, changing nothing in the diet, and keeping the record for at least five to seven days.

Bring the baseline diet diary to your first (or next) visit. We will help to determine which changes in your child's diet might be helpful. The diet diary should be kept throughout all changes in the diet, and as long as the child has any unresolved allergy problems. Bring the diary each time you come to the office, even if you have not been specifically asked to do so.

A sample diet diary is attached. Use a notebook to keep all your records together. Feel free to adjust the form so it is suitable for your own needs, as long as you continue to include all the information needed. Do not put off filling in the diary until the end of the day. It is helpful to get in the habit of keeping the diary notebook and a pencil handy at all times so that you won't be tempted to delay the recording. Memory is no substitute for careful record keeping!

1. RECORDING FOODS, DRINKS, AND MEDICATIONS:

While keeping a diet diary, it is essential that everything your child eats or drinks be listed in complete detail. Medicines and vitamins should be included. Ingredients should be listed, and it is also helpful to include brand names. This means you will have to read labels, and you will likely be surprised at how much hidden sugar your child is getting, or how many foods contain corn or soy -- or other things you thought your child never ate.

When reading labels, watch for derivatives of potentially allergenic foods. The following are some of the common derivatives:

MILK	butter, whey, casein, caseinate, calcium caseinate, sodium caseinate, dried milk powder or solids, evaporated milk, condensed milk, lactose, cream, buttermilk, margarine, yogurt, lactate, lactalbumin, cheese, curds, whey.
WHEAT	bran, wheat germ, bread crumbs, semolina, flour, enriched flour, durum flour, wheat flour, whole wheat flour, gluten, gluten flour, graham flour, malt, farina, modified food starch.
CORN	corn syrup, starch, cornstarch, corn sugar, corn sweeteners, hominy grits, dextrose, malt dextrin, fructose, maize, shortening, vegetable oil, glucose, sorbitol, cerelese.
EGGS	albumin, whole eggs, egg yolks, egg whites, dried eggs, powdered eggs, ovomucin, ovomucoid, vitellin or ovovitellin, meringue, livetin.

For foods or medicines used regularly, you may find it easier to make a separate list of ingredients in the back of your notebook, so that the daily listing of foods will not take so much time. For example:

Flintstones Chewable Vitamins with Iron and the daily list can read simply: “vitamin – purple.”

Campbell’s Tomato Soup (contains tomato, milk solids, salt, etc. – cooked with milk) and the daily list can read simply: “Tomato soup.”

As you will quickly see, feeding simple meals without a lot of processed prepackaged foods will simplify note keeping and will make it much easier to pinpoint your child’s food sensitivities. By removing artificial flavorings, colorings and other chemicals, you can determine your child’s reactions to specific foods.

2. RECORDING ACTIVITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Activities and major weather changes should be included in your child’s diary in order to help determine if environmental factors play a role in your child’s allergies. Playing outside, petting a cat, falling asleep on the carpet, raking leaves, and so forth, should be noted, as well as wind, rain, a high-pollution day, or a hard freeze. Note: also if weeds, grasses, or trees nearby are pollinating.

3. RECORDING SYMPTOMS

Symptoms to include in the diary are the very things for which you sought our help in the first place: congestion, cough, nasal discharge, rash, diarrhea, mood swings, bed wetting or daytime accidents in an older child. Watch also for red cheeks, character and frequency of stools (color, consistency – seedy, pasty, water, etc.), itching (anywhere), redness around the anus, or behavior changes. If you think you may be seeing an allergic reaction, but are not sure, jot it down anyway.

You will probably discover a great deal about your child and the diet in the process of record keeping. Bear in mind that the foods eaten most often are the most likely sources of allergy. There will likely be different reactions to different foods, but each individual food will consistently cause the same reaction each time it is eaten. For example, milk may cause loose stools, and will do so each time milk (or a milk derivative) is consumed by your child, but peaches may give him a rash. There will not be a rash one time and diarrhea another with the same food. Each child will react differently.

4. RECORDING TIMES

Times should be noted in the diary for all items listed. This is important in order to help establish which factor was the cause of the reaction. Foods usually take two to four hours to manifest a reaction, though they may react within minutes. The reaction may continue until the food is entirely eliminated from the digestive tract – usually three to four days. Some reactions last only minutes. Nothing the time the reaction was first noticed and how long it lasts is very helpful. Pay special attention to your child’s condition just before a meal or snack and about 30 to 60 minutes after he/she eats.

EXAMPLE OF A CORRECTLY FILLED OUT DIARY PAGE:

If you follow the rules, your diary will look something like the following example.

DATE:

<u>TIME</u>	<u>FOOD/DRINKS/MEDS</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES/EXPOSURES</u>	<u>SYMPTOMS</u> <u>(1-4+)</u>
Night 7:30 am		Sleeping Awakened	Wet bed Coughing & stuffy nose 4+
8:15 am	Cheerios/Milk Frozen O.J. Scrambled egg (in butter) Vitamin – orange		
9:30 am		Watching TV	Red cheeks x ½ hrs
10:00 am	Apple Juice		
Noon			Loose stool
12:30 pm	Tomato soup Hot dog (Hormel) Ketchup Sweet pickle Canned peaches (in syrup)		
1:00 pm		Playing on grass	Nasal discharge 3+
3:00 pm	Cherry Kool-Aid Potato chips		
3:10 pm			Hyperactivity 4+ Threw tantrum
4:00 pm		Petting cat	
4:30 pm	Apple Juice		
5:30 pm	Fried Chicken Mashed potatoes/gravy (milk, butter, flour) Lettuce, tomato French dressing 8 oz. milk		
6:30 pm			Loose stool & red cheeks
7:30 pm	Vanilla ice cream		
8:15 pm		Bath	
8:30 pm		To bed	Stuffy nose 2+
11:30 pm			Night terror

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL OUR OFFICE WITH ANY QUESTIONS

