

Dairy-Free and Loving It!

BY JOANNE GORDON, N.D., P.T.

I never had a blemish during my teenage years, but in my mid-20s I developed extensive facial acne. I washed and scrubbed my face daily, used blemish creams and took good care of myself. Nothing seemed to make a difference. If anything, my skin got worse. I couldn't figure out why I was getting acne at this time in my life. I was active, healthy and vegetarian. I loved dairy. I loved ice cream, milk and all types of yogurt. I thought that yogurt was healthy to eat, so I would buy a dozen fruit yogurts at once when it was on sale. I had no idea that dairy was causing my problem until I heard a lecture given by a doctor from California.

During this lecture I learned that dairy was a major factor in the production of pain and other symptoms including allergies, headaches, chronic infections, bowel problems and skin disorders, like acne and eczema. The doctor highly recommended patients with pain or any other disturbance within the body to remove dairy from their diet. He was confident that we would see amazing results once we stopped consuming dairy.

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I decided to give it a try. I became an educated consumer and began diligently reading product labels. I was a dairy detective, avoiding all dairy and its two proteins, casein and whey

which are hidden in many "non-dairy" labeled foods. Over the next six months, I completely eliminated dairy and any food that contained dairy protein. My face cleared up within a week and I lost six pounds in four months. I was amazed and I felt so much better!

Food Allergies

At that time, I had never heard of food allergies. But now, it is an integral part of my life. I am conscious of how foods affect me physically and emotionally. I am attentive to how foods affect my son, husband and patients.

The concept of food allergies dates back 100 years when a British physician linked ailments such as gout and eczema to problematic foods. He found that when these foods were eliminated from the diet, the symptoms would resolve.

Food allergies cause a cascade of events that promote inflammation. The influence of these inflammatory substances within the body affect us physically by giving us signs such as; acne, ear aches, fatigue, headaches, and insomnia. The chemicals involved in this process also extend up to specific areas of the brain, which affect behavior (e.g. hyperactivity) and mood (e.g. depression).

Food allergies can be evaluated by drawing a small sample of blood. The blood is then processed and sent to a lab for evaluation. A common lab analysis is the ELISA (enzyme-linked immunoabsorbent assay) test. This test determines the number of antibodies that react with each individually

tested food. The more antibodies present, the stronger the possibility of that food causing an allergic reaction in your body. Once an offending food(s) is discovered it should be eliminated from the diet. After a period of time, the allergenic foods may be carefully reintroduced into your meal plan.

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Elimination Phase

The elimination phase is a time for welcoming change. Your home-cooked meals may require a conscious effort to prepare things differently. Dining out may require a more mindful meal selection and you'll begin asking about ingredients or requesting special orders. When grocery shopping, you'll discover product labels to determine if there are any hidden food allergens. During this process, you'll find yourself feeling better than before. Your old habits will go by the wayside and you will know that the change was well worth the effort.

Transformation is a journey of living, loving, and learning about our environment and ourselves. I still practice dairy-free living. Occasionally I'll eat something with dairy in it, but I always get a gentle reminder — acne.



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