

food and mood

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Histamine Hell

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Histamine-containing foods can contribute to high histamine levels in the body. For histamine-sensitive people, this can be a problem. New research suggests that high levels of this essential neurotransmitter are associated with anxiety and panic attacks. Other research has shown that schizophrenia symptoms can arise from a histamine imbalance influencing brain functioning.

Emotional and mental health symptoms due to abnormally high histamine could be helped simply by reducing or avoiding the high risk, high histamine, foods, and choosing low histamine foods instead.

High summer can be hellish for hay fever sufferers as the body's immune defences go into overdrive and produce the irritating and disabling symptoms of red, itchy eyes, watering eyes, runny nose and sneezing. The chemical histamine is largely responsible for this familiar but unwanted response to high levels of pollens in the atmosphere. Therefore it is often antihistamine medication and nasal sprays that are used to gain some relief.

Research published earlier this year in the *Journal of Nutritional & Environmental Medicine* (Vol 11, no.4, 249-262) into the effects of a histamine-restricted diet on allergy symptoms of patients at Vancouver Hospital, Canada, showed some unexpected but interesting 'food and mood' findings.

Unlike an allergic reaction to a food, a food intolerance reaction depends on the individual's sensitivity threshold as well as how much of a problem food they consume. This study looked into the effects of a 4-week low-histamine diet that avoided histamine-containing foods and histamine-releasing foods (see next page) in order to reduce the total load of histamine in the body.

The research was primarily aimed at studying the effect on allergic symptoms such as urticaria (hives), angioedema (swelling) and pruritus (itching). 61% of the people in the study reported a significant improvement to these symptoms but, according to Dr Janice Joneja of the Allergy Nutrition Clinic at Vancouver Hospital, there was also another 'surprising report of considerable improvement'.

The unexpected finding was in the benefits experienced by all three of the 44 people taking part in the study who had also suffered 'panic-like attacks' as well as their other, more physical, symptoms. Prior to undertaking the diet, they had suffered feelings of overwhelming anxiety,

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FROM THE EDITOR



You may have noticed that your copy of *Food and Mood* has been delivered to you a little later than planned. I hope you'll agree it was worth the wait but please also accept our apologies. The reason for the slight delay in putting together this issue is the huge response to the recent Food and Mood survey. A massive amount of data was generated by our questionnaire. This has now been analysed and a report is being prepared. More about this in future issues and also via the Project website.

Meanwhile, your summer read includes an article about histamine intolerance, a mother's account of a special diet for helping with autism, and a nutritional therapist's report of her food and mood work in a secure psychiatric hospital. So, with all the other usual goodies to tempt you, there should be something here for everyone!

Enjoy the sunshine!
Amanda Geary
Food and Mood Project Founder

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Explore the relationship between what you eat and how you feel