

Diet for Histamine Intolerance

HISTAMINE “LIBERATORS” TO AVOID

- Most citrus fruits
- Cocoa and chocolate
- Nuts
- Papaya
- Tomatoes
- Wheat germ
- Alcohol
- Black tea energy drinks
- Green tea, mate tea
- Additives (benzoate, sulfites, nitrites, glutamate and food dyes)

FOODS TO ENCOURAGE

VEGETABLES: Add the following to dishes as much as possible: artichokes, basil, broccoli, celery, chives, cilantro, dill, garlic, onions (either cooked onions or spring onions in small amounts), oregano, parsley, rosemary, snap peas, watercress, and ancho, serrano and chili peppers. These are all high in quercetin and other phytonutrients, which help reduce the body burden of histamine. Capers are particularly rich in quercetin, but one should use only salt-dried capers (not capers in vinegar). Be sure to rinse the capers before using.

FRUIT: Apples and cranberries also are high in quercetin.

GRAINS: Rice bran (especially from black rice) reduces histamine. Heirloom black rice can be found in health food stores (often called “forbidden rice”) or online.¹¹

PEA SPROUTS: Although consumption of pea sprouts is optional, it is encouraged when possible. Pea sprouts can be used liberally as they are high in the DAO enzyme, which helps break down histamine. The easiest way to use them is to juice or blend them and drink with meals. Sprouting peas to get the highest amount of DAO takes about ten days. The best time to drink pea sprout juice is with any meal containing meat or fish.

ALLOWED FOODS AND FOODS TO AVOID

The information below is adapted from the list provided in the book, [Is Your Food Making You Sick?](#) by James L. Gibb. Among the sources used by Gibb to compile the list are Dr. Janice Jones, Allergy UK, the Swiss Allergy Centre and the Swiss Interest Group Histamine Intolerance. Gibb’s list offers the strictest interpretation of what may constitute a problematic food for histamine; I have loosened it up a little to allow some sprouted beans. I also provide careful instructions on how to eat meat and fish.

VEGETABLES

ALLOWED: All fresh vegetables (except those on the “avoid” list). Water chestnuts can be used to make a starchy flour.

AVOID: Bell peppers, eggplant, onion (raw), pumpkin, purslane, spinach, tomatoes, winter squash, fermented vegetables (sauerkraut, pickles, etc.), overripe or rotten vegetables, all pickled vegetables (or anything that contains vinegar), prepackaged salad or other vegetables.

Use caution with kale (small amounts only) due to its oxalate content.

FRUIT

ALLOWED: Apples, coconut, fig, goldenberries, longans, loquat, lychees, mango, melon, passionfruit, persimmon, pomegranate, quince, rhubarb and starfruit.

AVOID: All other fruit, especially strawberries, dried fruit that contains sulfur, overripe or rotten fruit, olives and avocado.

GRAINS/BAKING

ALLOWED: Millet, oats, oat bran, rice (black, brown, purple, red or “regular”), rice bran, teff and wild rice. For baking: agar-agar, arrowroot, baking powder, baking soda, coconut flour, cornstarch (although this one is questionable in terms of general nutrition), guar gum, potato starch, rice flour, sago and water chestnut flour.

AVOID: Amaranth, buckwheat, quinoa and all wheat products. Avoid baked goods made with carrageenan, gelatin, tapioca starch, xanthan gum and yeast.

FISH/MEAT/POULTRY

Histamine is present in small amounts in animal flesh but after death, histamine increases quickly (especially in fish that retain the guts). These foods may be problematic for extremely sensitive individuals and may need to be avoided completely. However, I encourage everyone to try consuming fish, poultry and red meat according to the guidelines below.

ALLOWED: Maximum one serving per day, or avoid altogether if symptoms do not subside within four to six weeks.

AVOID: All shellfish, fish that has not been cleaned and frozen immediately, canned fish. All processed meat, aged meat, meat that has been cooked and not immediately frozen, leftovers from the fridge, meat that is not fresh, fermented meat and canned meat.

GUIDELINES: Fish should have the guts cleaned out on the boat and be frozen immediately. Salmon, snapper, Chilean sea bass, squid and octopus are commonly sold this way, but one should always check at the fish market. (When buying fish from a local market, make sure that the vendor is trustworthy and the fish is of the best quality.) Vital Choice is a good source of seafood because their king salmon, silver salmon, tuna and cod are guaranteed to be cleaned and frozen immediately on the boat, and they ship the fish frozen to the customer’s home. For meat and poultry, grass-fed is best. Small farms often will freeze meat and poultry immediately after processing and can be good places to purchase meat. Check out [Yonderway Farm](#) outside of Houston for grass-fed meat, and pastured chicken and eggs. Buy in bulk and do not defrost until ready to cook. If buying from a butcher, only buy on the day the meat is processed. Do not buy already ground meat; instead, ask the butcher to grind the meat, place it in a cooler and rush home and cook or freeze. (Note: Freezing halts the bacteria-induced multiplication of histamine in animal flesh, but refrigeration does not. Cooking does not reduce or take away histamine, so once it’s there, it’s there.)

LEGUMES

ALLOWED: Properly sprouted beans (except red beans and soybeans).

AVOID: All legumes that have not been sprouted, red beans, soybeans in any form and peanuts.

DAIRY

ALLOWED: Mascarpone, panir, quark, salted ricotta cheese (not the typical American kind that contains vinegar but the kind made in Italy, which may be hard to find, but is well worth the effort), fresh mozzarella, fresh cream, uncultured butter and buttermilk and fresh, raw milk. Some people tolerate any super fresh cheese such as nonaged chèvre and feta.

AVOID: Any cheeses not listed above, such as cheddar, Monterey Jack, processed cheeses, aged cheeses of all kinds, fermented dairy of any kind (yogurt, kefir, some types of cheese, sour cream, creme fraiche, etc.) and cottage cheese.

EGGS

ALLOWED: Fresh raw and cooked egg yolks. If eating raw egg yolks, be sure to only use fresh, pasture-raised eggs from a known and reliable farmer; do not eat raw eggs from the supermarket. Many people tolerate cooked egg whites but some don't, so use caution. If using as a protein source, make sure to use the whole egg. Pasture-raised eggs are ideal.

AVOID: All raw egg whites, raw commercial egg yolks and stale eggs. Use caution with cooked egg whites.

NUTS

ALLOWED: None.

AVOID: All nuts (coconut is a fruit and is allowed), but especially almonds, pecans and walnuts.

SEEDS

ALLOWED: Soaked chia seeds, freshly ground and soaked flax seeds and their oils, and properly sprouted seeds. "Raw" is a good brand for sprouted seeds.

AVOID: Unsprouted seeds and sesame seeds.

HERBS AND SPICES

ALLOWED: Salt, pepper, fresh curry leaves, wasabi, fresh herbs and freshly ground spices (except those on the "avoid" list). Some allowed herbs and spices include: allspice, basil, bay leaf, caraway, cardamom, chives, coriander (cilantro), fenugreek, garlic, ginger root, marjoram, mint, myrtle leaf, oregano, parsley, peppermint, pimento leaf, rosemary, sage, savory, sumac, tarragon and turmeric. Black cumin seed (but not regular cumin) has antihistamine properties and is encouraged. Alcohol-free vanilla and other extracts are also allowed.

AVOID: Alcohol-based flavors, anise, artificial flavors, brewer's yeast, cayenne pepper, chili, chocolate, cinnamon, cloves, cocoa, curry, mace, mustard seed, nutmeg, smoke flavor, soy sauce and all soy products, tamari, tamarind (fermented), thyme, vinegar of all kinds and any food containing vinegar.

BEVERAGES

ALLOWED: Coffee, fresh raw milk, mineral water, fresh water, chamomile tea, peppermint tea, dandelion tea, ginger tea, rooibos tea, coconut water and coconut milk.

AVOID: Soft drinks, all alcohol (but in particular wine and beer), anything fermented (such as

kombucha and kefir), black tea, green tea, red raspberry tea, nettle tea, mate tea and energy drinks.

FATS AND OILS

ALLOWED: Cold pressed and unrefined seed and nut oils (Flora is the only brand I recommend), extra virgin olive oil, pure uncultured butter and cream, coconut butter and coconut cream, duck fat and goose fat.

AVOID: Vegetable oils, heat-treated or refined nut and seed oils, fried foods, processed foods, partially hydrogenated oils and fats, fish oil, avocado, olives, margarine and spreads such as Earth Balance and other fake fats.

SWEETENERS

ALLOWED: Pasteurized honey (or raw honey from a reliable source), maple syrup, brown rice syrup, coconut sugar, treacle, molasses, jaggery, palm sugar, pure jams, jellies and marmalade.

AVOID: Flavored syrups, prepared desserts and icings and dried fruit; high fructose corn syrup and agave. Caution with sugar alcohols such as xylitol (which can cause gas in those with compromised gut health).

REFERENCES

1. Maintz L, Novak N. Histamine and histamine intolerance. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2007;85(5):1185-1196.
2. MastCellAware. <http://www.mastcellaware.com/index.html>.
3. Molecular Immunopharmacology & Drug Discovery Laboratory. <http://www.mastcellmaster.com/index.php>.
4. Armonk Integrative Medicine for Optimum Health. <http://www.armonkmed.com/about/dr-afrin/>.
5. Umbrellux™ DAO. <https://www.umbrelluxdao.com/>.
6. NeuroProtek®. <http://algonot.com/product/neuroprotek/>.
7. Manzotti G, Breda D, Di Gioacchino M, Burastero SE. *Int J Immunopathol Pharmacol* 2016;29(1):105-111.
8. Research: Dr. Theoharides at Tufts University. <http://www.mastcellmaster.com/research.php>.
9. Study to investigate the effect of an oral diamine oxidase substitution (DAOsin) in histamine intolerant patients on the low endogenous diamine oxidase serum activity. <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT03298568>.
10. <https://www.amazon.com/Caravaglio-Capers-Sicily-Pack-2/dp/B008SF2CZK>.
11. Histamine intolerance. www.low-histamine.com.
12. Gibb JL. *Is Food Making You Sick? The Strictly Low Histamine Diet*. Brighton, Victoria: Leaves of Gold Press; 2014.