

# Identifying adverse food reactions

Strategies for treatment include elimination diets and enzyme supplementation.

BY WALTER J. CRINNION, ND

**F**OR THE PAST 40 YEARS, THE numbers of asthma and allergy sufferers have been steadily climbing. In 2005, 54 percent of Americans showed a positive reaction to skin-scratch testing for at least one allergen.<sup>1</sup>

Today, if you polled your friends and relatives you'd likely find several who are avoiding gluten, dairy, or some other common food. Gluten intolerance has reached such proportions that Domino's pizza recently introduced gluten-free pizza, which is available at all of their locations.<sup>2</sup>

Why are allergies, intolerances, and adverse reactions to foods becoming so common?

The increasing load of environmental toxicants in our food, air, and water has been shown to cause an immune system imbalance that leads to increased rates of allergies and a reduced ability to fight off infections.<sup>3</sup> The toxicants that cause this include ones that we all breathe daily: diesel and gasoline exhaust, as well as plastics and a host of other compounds.

A recent study was published by a doctor in Indiana who noticed that his Amish patients did not have anywhere near the rates of asthma as his non-Amish patients.<sup>4</sup> Amish vehicles may put out emissions, but those come from the animals pulling them, not from diesel or gasoline engines. For the Amish, cleaner living is clearly paying off.

In addition to the increased environmental toxicant burden that is causing people's bodies to be increasingly reactive, the food supply is also to blame. Since Norman Borlaug introduced the F1 hybrid seeds to agriculture in the 1950s (and for which



he won a Nobel prize), our crops have lost their genetic diversity as the seeds for our major crops (wheat, soy, corn, rice) are now all coming from the same sources instead of from the thousands of farmers who passed their seeds from generation to generation. With all the major foods having the same antigenic signatures presenting themselves to reactive immune systems, it is not hard to see why it is now rare to find someone who is not having adverse food reactions to something.

Foods that trigger an immunoglobulin-E- (IgE) mediated histamine release are considered to be

true food allergies. The most severe form of this problem can result in life-threatening anaphylactic reactions.

Food intolerances (with the exception of gluten intolerance) are caused by an insufficiency of digestive enzymes to break down a specific food. Adverse food reactions can have an immune component (typically elevated IgG), a digestive component (insufficient levels of digestive enzymes), a compromised mucosal barrier (low secretory IgA and leaky gut), as well as dysbiosis.

In addition to the toxic burden predisposing the immune system to be more reactive, it also leads to reduced

