

Why we holistic doctors test for allergies

Virtually every new patient who sees me at the Hoffman Center gets tested for food allergies with the IgG RAST test. This is a special test, available only from complementary physicians, that measures immune system reactions to common foods.

Occasionally patients ask, "Why test ME?" They note that they have no obvious symptoms of allergy, like wheezing, sneezing or itching. Additionally, many say that they note no immediate or obvious reactions to foods such as wheat, dairy, corn or citrus. So what's the point of testing?

Stunning confirmation of the importance of testing for food allergies even in asymptomatic patients comes from an article in this month's (August 2009) issue of the medical journal *Diabetes*.

Researchers noted that almost half of the 42 type 1 diabetics tested in their study had an abnormal immune response to wheat proteins. Lead researcher Dr. Fraser Scott of the University of Ottawa writes:

"Our research suggests that people with certain genes may be more likely to develop an over-reaction to wheat and possibly other foods in the gut and this may tip the balance with the immune system and make the body more likely to develop other immune problems, such as type 1 diabetes."

Other studies have confirmed that a wheat-free diet can reduce the risk of acquiring diabetes. Maybe we'll have to rethink the "Breakfast of Champions" thing.

The implications are clear for other autoimmune disorders. Virtually any part of the body can be involved. If the immune system lashes out against the brain, it can result in MS; if the attack is on the intestine, ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease; if on the skin, psoriasis; if on the joints, rheumatoid arthritis, and so on. The list of autoimmune conditions is virtually endless, and their incidence appears to be increasing.

I have seen the dramatic results of food elimination guided by the IgG RAST. Cases of autoimmune kidney disease resolve. Lupus is brought under control. Severe asthma improves. Bodily aches and pains disappear.

The culprit often is wheat, or gluten. Celiac disease may or may not be present in its full-blown form. Alternatively dairy, yeast, corn, tomatoes, eggs or other common foods are implicated.

It's high time that the medical community consider foods as a potential trigger for autoimmunity.