




# How to Reintroduce Foods on the Elimination Diet

Navigate the Most Difficult Part of the Process with 4 Step Guide

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# How to Reintroduce Foods

Ok, so at this point you've eliminated the foods you might be sensitive to for 6 weeks.

Your symptoms have settled down quite a bit or abated completely, and you're feeling pretty awesome for the first time in a long time.

Now, if you want, it's time to reintroduce foods into your diet.

This reintroduction phase is essentially a pop quiz for your gut and immune system.

You're trying to provoke a reaction and recreate those gross and uncomfortable symptoms you left behind.

Wait, what? You want me to feel crappy again? Are you crazy?

This is exactly why reintroduction isn't appropriate for everyone.

And it's by far the hardest step to execute in the elimination diet process.

## Here's a rundown of why reintroduction might NOT be right for you:

### **It makes you feel crappy again, possibly for a few days.**

Reactions create inflammation and an immune response, whether direct or indirect. This is how you tell if you're sensitive to a food, by provoking a response. Not fun, but informative.

### **You run the risk of falling off the wagon.**

Sometimes once a food is tested, all bets are off and the mental element of favorite-food deprivation kicks in. Suddenly, that food is back in your diet daily and you really don't care that you're feeling crappy. At least for the first few days. Then it's a long haul emotionally to recover that precious progress you made toward your health goals.

### **It's quite possible you won't get clear results.**

No system is perfect, and our digestion and overall health is influenced by many factors: our stress level, immune system, sleep, past medical history and more. When you reintroduce a food you may have multiple factors influencing how you feel, confusing your results.

### **It's easy to mess up the reintroduction phase.**

It's a pretty rigorous and strict protocol to follow, depending on how many foods you want to test. You really have to be on top of how you manage the steps and come up with a cohesive approach and plan.



Despite all of this, many people want to go through with reintroduction.

The main reason?

Plain and simple, they want to know what they're sensitive to.

Most of the time, this comes down to being able to deal with social situations or enjoy convenience foods.

If the reintroduction phase is done correctly, you should have a roadmap to what you react to and how strongly.

Then you can make informed decisions in your life about when you want to allow a food in.

Maybe it's a work party where you really don't want to have to deal with telling your co-workers one more time why you aren't eating anything.

Or maybe it's being able to pick up a quick weeknight dinner at the deli of your favorite grocery store.

Oftentimes these reasons are very personal and depend on how comfortable people feel upsetting the food status-quo in their public life.

I've been through many eliminations/reintroductions myself as I tried to figure out my own sensitivities, but the first few were always the hardest socially and personally as I adapted to the pushback from well meaning, but confused folks about what I was doing.

For example, I became a vegan. In St. Louis.

Not a lot of understanding or support there in the ol' Midwest for anything beyond vegetarianism, which was already widely misunderstood (you eat chicken, right?).

Many people had no concept of the term "vegan" and I had one young woman ask me point blank, "So.....what do you eat?"

My internal monologue said, "Everything else! Plants, beans, grains, veggies, fruits, nuts, fats! Dairy and meat and eggs aren't the only food groups!"

But I spent most of my time trying to gently justify my choices without offending anyone. And justification is a losing battle.

What you put in your body is your choice, but if it's out of the norm it often becomes public commentary.

And doing food reintroductions can help you to navigate all of this dietary spectatorship if you know a few things that you're only mildly or not at all sensitive to.

It can give you a clear picture of the food in your life so you can make the best choice possible for yourself in whatever situation you happen to be in.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is called empowerment, and it's a wonderful feeling.

You'll now have a completely new and meaningful way to practice self care, which is the true path to healing.



# The Process

Let's recap exactly how the process of reintroduction goes, should you choose to accept this mission.

First, you need to have been away from foods you react to for 6 weeks and/or your symptoms have completely resolved.

If your symptoms are still present, do not start the reintroduction phase.

You may need to eliminate more foods, continue the eliminate phase for longer, or seek medical advice to address any potential underlying issues.

Ok, here's how it goes...

## **#1. Make a list of all of the foods you want to reintroduce, ordering them from greatest desire to least desire.**

You'll start with the foods that you most want to have back in your diet first. It's important to test these at the beginning because reintroduction can be a long process (as you'll see outlined below, just the basic reintroductions can take 4 weeks).

The foods you're pining for will most likely be the ones that will cause you to slip up the most often, so testing them first thing increases your chances of clear results in reintroduction, then in the long term helps to mitigate disastrous fall-off-the-wagon potential issues.

## **#2. Eat one food 3 times for 1 day and track your symptoms.**

There's a lot to unpack here, so let me clarify.

That one food should be the purest form of that food possible. If it's wheat you're testing, eat a piece of wheat bread (make sure the bread doesn't have other allergens, like soy, sugar, or eggs).

Eat the food a few minutes before the rest of your meal.

And, you have to eat a significant quantity of it. Remember, we're trying to provoke a reaction.

If you have a reaction the first time you eat something, don't eat it again. You've got your answer, no use torturing yourself!

I've included a chart to help you with quantities and types of food. It tells you what to eat and how much to eat for the major sensitivities I mentioned in Figuring Out Your Food Allergies Part 2. If you're testing others not included in this chart, use your best judgment based on these recommendations to come up with a good test food and quantity.

A special note about dairy and eggs: there are 3 components in dairy and 2 components in eggs that are worth testing separately. Clearly, this will extend your timeline of reintroductions, so it might not be practical for everyone.

### **The 3 components of dairy:**

Lactose – found the most in soft or liquid dairy products like milk, soft cheeses, ice cream, yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, and cream cheese. This is the component most people are sensitive to, though it is common to be sensitive to all of the components as well.

Casein – found in the highest quantities in hard cheeses like parmesan.

Whey – found in the highest concentration in whey protein powders and most soft dairy products.

What about sheep or goat dairy?

Those would be need to be removed from your diet during the elimination phase and tested separately, as some folks sensitive to dairy also have problems with sheep and goat products.

### **The 2 components of eggs:**

Yolk and whites.

It could be valuable to understand if you react to both or just one if you want to have, say, a meringue. I'm sure there are other examples, I just really like meringue.



# My Reintroduction Plan

Make a list of all of the foods you want to reintroduce, ordering them from greatest desire to least desire.

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## Quick Reference

Reintroducing	Food	Quantity
Lactose	milk	1 cup
Casein	Cheddar or parmesan cheese (cheddar = more of a blend between casein and lactose, parmesan = more casein)	1-2oz
Whey	whey protein powder	1-2 scoops
Gluten	100% whole wheat noodles or whole wheat bread	1 cup 1 slice
Corn	frozen corn or fresh corn on the cob	3/4 to 1 cup 1 cob
Egg white	white omelet	1 egg white
Egg yolk	yolk-scrambled omelet	1 egg yolk
Soy	soy milk, unsweetened	1 cup
Sugar	pure cane sugar	1 Tbsp

### **#3. Record any symptoms or reactions that you have for the next 72 hours, or until the symptoms resolve.**

This is where things can get really tricky.

Remember, most food sensitivity or intolerance reactions are delayed, so don't be surprised if you feel fine most of the day and wake up the next morning feeling off or experiencing a flare of your old symptoms.

At this point in the diet, however, it's common for reactions to be stronger and more clear than they used to be because you've lowered the inflammatory load.

Before when you were eating lots of inflammatory foods, your body was constantly trying to clean up that inflammation, so it didn't have much more bandwidth to react.

Now that you've wiped the slate clean, so to speak, when you create inflammation in your body, you're going to feel it a lot more clearly.



It's important in this stage to be patient and really listen to your body.

Sometimes a reaction will be really obvious, and other times it will be more subtle and mixed in with the other confounding factors I mentioned earlier – poor sleep, more stress, a possible sickness (sidetone: it's pretty common to get sick after a major clean up of your diet).

It's a tough distinction sometimes.

If you don't feel any different than before you ate the food, you're in the clear.

However, if you have any reservations about whether or not fatigue, pain, or other symptoms have recurred, you might want to chalk it up to a mild sensitivity and re-test again at the end of the reintroduction phase.

The safe bet is to continue avoiding the food for a couple more months (I know, I know, that's not the fun answer).

But, as time goes on, the picture should get clearer and you should continue to feel better in the meantime.

So, if you have a reaction to a food, omit it from your diet as you move forward.

If you don't react to a food, congratulations! Add that food back into your diet. Hooray!

**BONUS:** I've developed a reintroduction journal for you that's located at the end of this guide.

It outlines events or circumstances to follow (bowel issues, mood, how much water you're drinking) to help you gauge what's normal and what's might be an ambiguous, yet significant inflammatory response.

Of course, a recurrence of your previous symptom pattern is the central target, but recording other circumstances of the days you reintroduce a food can be very helpful in discovering how exactly that food affects you.

And the information trail serves as a transparent, documented reminder of how these foods impact your life, something that we commonly want to dismiss so we can go back to eating them (yes, even after all of this effort!).

Check out the very end for those printable templates!



#### **#4. Reintroduce your next food a minimum of 72 hours later or when your symptoms have cleared.**

This one is very simple in principle, but difficult in practice to execute.

The key here is not to rush your reintroduction process, as tempting as it may be.

After you've added something in, you've potentially created inflammation and you have to let that settle before trying any other foods.

Otherwise, your results will be muddled, as extra inflammation masks your full symptom reaction, which is similar to what was happening before the elimination diet.

As mentioned in the last step, it's a common to experience seemingly mild reactions to a food before the elimination diet, then in the reintroduction phase, have much more intense reactions.

So, if you've had a reaction to a food you tested, you must wait until your symptoms have cleared or 72 hours, whichever is the longest period of time. Sometimes symptom flares last a few hours and sometimes they last for a week.

Even if you don't feel like you've reacted to a food, wait 72 hours to try out the next food.

Again, reactions can be delayed, so you want to give your immune system the full 3 days to potentially create a noticeable reaction.

By waiting, you're ensuring that you reduce the inflammatory load back to a baseline level so you'll get clear results when you reintroduce the next food.

If you rush through reintroduction, your results will definitely be muddled.

Hang in there! It's worth the wait to find out what you're sensitive to so you have clear-cut, simple answers!



# Remember....

This process isn't easy and you should feel great for even embarking on it!

You're actively trying to improve yourself so you can get more out of your life and, by extension, improve the lives of those around you.

This is the beginning of a lifelong journey of listening to your body's reactions to foods. So be patient with yourself.

How your body responds will shift over time, and this creates more opportunity for learning and growth.

I don't mean to sugarcoat the process – it's difficult, messy, frustrating, and confusing sometimes.

But it's also massively rewarding when you start feeling like yourself again and the aches and pains, gut issues, mood fluctuations, and more are finally out of your life.

Try to enjoy the journey and respect your body and you'll always be headed in the right direction.

***DON'T FORGET... the Reintroduction Journal on the next page....***

Discover more online at <http://www.drlizcarter.com>



## **Hi. I'm Dr. Liz Carter.**

I'm here to help you go from just surviving to fully thriving. Achieve all you want out of life through better health and a deeper understanding of yourself and others. Here, take my hand. Let's get started.

