

My story

Being constantly plagued by minor health problems had become a way of life for me. The crippling joint pain, the yo-yoing weight, the skin rashes, headaches, sinusitis, and tinnitus had become so usual that I had stopped seeing them as “illness” and accepted them as normal for me. What else could I do?

My diet was packed full of healthy fruit and vegetables. Visits to doctors invariably resulted in diagnoses of a virus, stress, wear and tear, or tiredness. There was, apparently, nothing wrong with me. I knew I wasn't as healthy as I could be but no matter what I did nothing changed. During this time I pretty much became an expert on relaxation techniques, meditation, healthy eating, stress management, alternative therapies and creative visualisation. Life, at times, did get easier but I was never fully well.

By the time I was in my late thirties, the problems had become serious. I was constantly ill and began experiencing episodes of severe debilitating tiredness and illness. According to the medical profession, there was nothing wrong with me that some fresh air, exercise and maybe a drop in weight wouldn't cure. But these measures did not work and my health got worse. I stopped being able to work and my life began to unravel.

Thankfully, I am a fighter and thankfully I had helped my husband “cure” his migraines and depression by identifying problems with grains, yeast, sugar and tyramine. Looking back I can only smile at how throughout that process it never once occurred to me that my own problems, mental as well as physical, could have their foundation in the food I was eating.

It was on a sunny, day out in York that I finally made the connection. Sitting on the steps of the Minster exhausted after a very short walk and nursing a migraine, I watched people closely and came to the conclusion that the bloating I was experiencing and the translucent mottled skin I had developed were most definitely not normal. But what was wrong with me?

Biting into an apple my migraine raged even more ferociously and then receded leaving me with a severe low blood sugar problem. It was at that moment that I thought to myself that maybe, just maybe, some of my problems were being caused by food.

Within a few weeks of following an elimination diet I had made enormous progress. The weight began to disappear, the headaches stopped, my skin began to clear, my joints were mobile, my ears stopped ringing and my sinuses cleared. But what surprised me most of all were the changes in my behaviour and feelings.

The manic hyperactive energy followed by extreme fatigue, the mood swings, the inexplicable anxiety, tension, disorientation and confusion, the memory problems, and the extreme need to be alone all began to fade into the background. I had long ago decided that I had a personality defect probably caused by some event that was locked in my memory that I couldn't access. I was wrong, seriously wrong. These psychological and behavioural symptoms were all being caused by the food I was eating.

To cut a very long story short my health improved and I returned to work but a few months later began to re-experience problems. At this point it seemed that I was intolerant of nearly everything I ate and my diet was very restricted. I decided not give in but to carry out more

research and eventually I discovered the information on food chemicals, salicylates in particular, which I needed. At last I had found the cause of my problems. The journey had been long, painful and extremely lonely but at last I had arrived at a reason and a “cure”. I became far healthier than I had ever been.

Extract from

The Food Intolerance Handbook

by Sharla Race.