

# Histamine Intolerance

(based on Dr. Chris Masterjohn's work)

Histamine intolerance is a fairly common, though poorly understood, food sensitivity. It is different from other types of food allergies in both the resulting symptoms, and the way in which those symptoms are produced. Specifically, rather than being an intolerance to a specific food antigen (as seen with gluten or dairy intolerance), histamine intolerance is thought to be due to a limited ability of the body to breakdown histamine (causing high histamine levels). This can happen for various reasons, but is often due to small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), dysbiosis, DAO deficiency, or allergies (IgE reactions).

Histamine intolerance is cumulative, based on the total amount of histamine in your body at a given time. This cumulative response to histamine is analogous to a cup of water. If a cup of water is already very full (similar to high amounts of histamine in the body or diet), then even a few small drops of additional water will cause the cup to overflow (symptoms activated). However, if a cup is only minimally filled with water, then it would take much more water (histamine) to cause a response. This can make histamine intolerance difficult to identify as you may not see symptoms consistently depending on the levels of histamine in your body and food at that time (or, how full your glass of water is at the start). Thus, some histamine may be tolerable for you and it is important not to be overly restrictive in your diet since many histamine-containing foods are healthy as long as they do not elicit symptoms.

Common symptoms of histamine intolerance include: migraines or other headaches, nasal congestion, diarrhea, asthma and/or wheezing, low blood pressure, heart palpitations, hives, itching and flushing in response to foods that contain histamine. These symptoms can have other causes, including allergies, but histamine intolerance is one of the causes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We have summarized recommendations from Chris Masterjohn, PHD, to help manage histamine intolerance.

### Diet Modifications

- There is conflicting evidence about histamine and histamine rich foods. However, the following foods have consistently been shown to be rich in histamine, so we suggest removing them from your diet for 30 days to monitor for changes in symptoms: hard or semi-hard cheese, canned anchovies, smoked fish, all shellfish, deli meats, curry, mustard, soy sauce, yeast, avocado, banana, dried fruit, nuts, lemon, mandarin, and pineapple.
- This won't cure histamine intolerance but may help manage symptoms temporarily while we work towards finding the underlying imbalance or contributing factor.



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### Support DAO Production

- DAO is an enzyme in your gut that helps degrade and clear histamine from your foods.
- Copper, vitamin C and vitamin B6 are all important nutrients for the regulation of DAO.
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [copper status](#).
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [vitamin B6](#).
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [vitamin C](#).
- DAO increases during pregnancy and lowers when estrogen peaks during your menstrual cycle, specifically during ovulation and a few days before you start menstruating.
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [migraines and menstrual cycles](#).
- Supplemental DAO may be needed as part of the treatment.
  - Seeking Health Histamine Block. Please request via Secure Message in your Portal.
  - Kidney meat is a good source of DAO.
    - US Wellness Meats liverwurst
      - <https://grasslandbeef.com/grass-fed-beef-liverwurst>
    - Grass Fed Kidney by Ancestral Supplements
      - <https://ancestralsupplements.com/kidney>

### Methylation Support

- Methylation is a principle way of getting rid of histamine. You can find more information about methylation support on our “Alternative Approaches to MTHFR” handout or online with [Chris Masterjohn’s methylation series](#).

### Nutrient Considerations and Mast Cell Control

- Certain nutrient deficiencies have been shown to increase the burden of mast cells.
- Specifically, selenium and vitamin A deficiencies are important to monitor for.
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [vitamin A status](#).
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [selenium status](#).

### Alcohol and Medications

- In general, the more alcohol you consume, the less likely you are to tolerate histamine.
- Recommend to either avoid alcohol or find a tolerable dose. Consider half a drink three times per week if tolerated.
  - Link to the Chris Masterjohn episode on [alcohol and histamine](#).
- There are over 50 medications that could be linked to symptoms of histamine intolerance.
  - Link to Chris Masterjohn episode on [medications](#).

### Address Gut Imbalances

- Gut inflammation and imbalance can contribute to poor production of the DAO enzymes.
- Healing the gut will be important to histamine intolerance treatment.