

FOOD INTOLERANCES & ALLERGIES

FOOD INTOLERANCE TESTING

Understanding the evidence, controversy and informed choice

BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



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Understanding the evidence, controversy and informed choice

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My Thoughts

If you've read the previous articles in this series, you'll know that I believe understanding your health begins with curiosity.

Not fear.

Not following the latest trend.

Not believing everything you read on social media.

Curiosity.

One of the questions I'm asked most often is:

"Should I have a food intolerance test?"

It's a great question, but unfortunately there isn't a simple yes or no answer.

Over the years I've supported many people who have explored food intolerance testing. Some found it incredibly helpful. Others found it confusing. Some discovered that their symptoms were related to something completely different.

My own experience with testing helped me understand my body better, but I'm also very aware that this is an area where opinions differ, and the science continues to evolve.

As both a therapist and someone who's passionate about helping people make informed decisions, I think it's important to present both sides of the conversation.

What Is Food Intolerance Testing?

Food intolerance testing aims to identify foods that may be associated with symptoms such as:

Bloating

Digestive discomfort

Fatigue

Brain fog

Headaches

Skin complaints

Joint discomfort

Unlike allergy testing, food intolerance tests are not designed to diagnose food allergies.

This distinction is extremely important.

Food allergy testing looks for immune responses that can lead to immediate and potentially life-threatening reactions.

Food intolerance testing explores something very different.

Different companies use different methods, which is one reason there is ongoing debate within healthcare.

The Different Types of Testing

If you've started researching online, you'll probably have noticed there are lots of different tests available.

These include:

Blood Tests

Some laboratories measure food-specific IgG antibodies.

These tests aim to identify foods that may be associated with delayed reactions.

Research into the meaning of IgG antibodies is still developing, and different professional organisations interpret this evidence differently.

Elimination Diets

Many healthcare professionals consider a carefully planned elimination and reintroduction diet to be one of the most informative ways of exploring possible food intolerances.

This involves temporarily removing suspected foods before gradually reintroducing them while monitoring symptoms.

It's usually best undertaken with support from a qualified healthcare professional or registered dietitian to ensure nutritional adequacy.

Hydrogen Breath Tests

These tests are commonly used in hospitals to investigate conditions such as lactose intolerance or fructose malabsorption.

Unlike many commercial tests, they investigate how certain sugars are digested within the body.

Medical Investigations

Sometimes symptoms that appear to be related to food are actually caused by conditions such as:

Coeliac disease

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

Inflammatory bowel disease

Gallbladder disease

Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)

Thyroid disorders

Anaemia

This is why it's always important to consider the bigger picture before assuming food is the cause.

What Does the Current Evidence Say?

One of the things I value most is honesty.

The evidence surrounding food intolerance testing is still evolving.

Some healthcare professionals feel that certain commercial tests can provide useful information when interpreted alongside a person's symptoms.

Others believe there is currently insufficient evidence to recommend their routine use.

Organisations such as the NHS, the British Dietetic Association and the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology advise that food intolerance tests should not replace a thorough clinical assessment or medical investigation.

This doesn't necessarily mean that every person finds them unhelpful.

It means the results should always be interpreted carefully and within the context of your overall health.

As with many areas of healthcare, science continues to develop.

My Personal Experience

People often ask me why I chose to have food intolerance testing.

The answer is simple.

I wanted more information.

I wasn't looking for someone to tell me exactly what to eat.

I wasn't expecting one test to solve every symptom I'd ever experienced.

I simply wanted another piece of the puzzle.

When I received my results, I didn't immediately remove everything that appeared on the report.

Instead, I compared the results with my own experiences.

Did they make sense?

Had I noticed patterns before?

Could they help explain some of the symptoms I'd been experiencing?

For me, the answers were yes.

Making gradual changes helped me understand my body more clearly, but I also recognised that food was only one part of my overall wellbeing.

Sleep still mattered.

Stress still mattered.

Hormones still mattered.

Mental health still mattered.

Testing didn't replace those things.

It simply added another layer of understanding.

Why I Recommend YorkTest

People often ask which company I chose, and I'm always happy to share my own experience.

After researching the available options, I chose YorkTest because I found their approach clear and easy to understand. I also valued that they provided nutritional support to help interpret results rather than simply sending a report without any guidance.

That doesn't mean YorkTest is the right choice for everyone, and it doesn't mean the results should be viewed in isolation.

For me, it became one useful tool alongside everything else I was learning about my health.

If you'd like to learn more about the YorkTest service that I personally used, you can visit the recommendation page on my website, where I've shared further information and my referral link.

Things I Always Encourage

If you're considering food intolerance testing, I'd encourage you to:

Speak with your GP if you have persistent or concerning symptoms.

Rule out medical conditions such as coeliac disease before removing gluten from your diet.

Never ignore symptoms of a possible food allergy.

Avoid making large dietary changes without understanding the potential nutritional impact.

View any test results as one piece of information rather than a final diagnosis.

Work with a qualified healthcare professional if you need support interpreting results.

Key Takeaways

Food intolerance testing is different from food allergy testing.

There are several methods of investigating possible food intolerances.

Current research continues to evolve, and professional opinions differ.

Testing should complement—not replace—medical assessment.

Your symptoms, medical history and overall health are just as important as any laboratory report.

Before You Go...

One of the greatest lessons I've learned is that health is rarely about finding one perfect answer.

It's about collecting information.

Listening to your body.

Working with trusted professionals.

And gradually building a clearer understanding of yourself.

If you choose to explore food intolerance testing, I hope you'll do so with curiosity rather than expectation.

No single test defines your health.

No laboratory report knows your life.

Only you can bring together your experiences, your symptoms and the professional advice you receive.

That's where real understanding begins.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article.

I hope it has helped you feel more informed and more confident about navigating what can sometimes feel like a confusing area of health.

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YorkTest: Available Tests and Practitioner Discount

YorkTest offers a wider range of home-to-laboratory options, including: Premium Food Intolerance Test; Food Allergy Test; Food Intolerance & Allergy Bundle; Junior Food Intolerance Test; Gut Microbiome Test; Annual Health Test; Essential Health Check; Stress (Cortisol) Test; Female Hormones Test; Female Fertility Test; Menopause Test; Male Hormones Test; Thyroid Test; Liver Function Test; Cholesterol Test; Inflammation (CRP) Test; Vitamin D Test; Metabolic Health Test; and couples, parent-and-child, family and complete health-and-nutrition bundles.

If you decide that a YorkTest product is appropriate for you, visit www.yorktest.com/products/ and enter my practitioner discount code PLEAROYD at checkout for an additional £5 off.

Direct link: www.yorktest.com/products/

Testing should be considered alongside symptoms, clinical history and appropriate professional advice. A food allergy can be serious: suspected immediate allergy symptoms require medical assessment. IgG food-reactivity testing is different from diagnostic IgE allergy testing and remains debated, so results should not be used alone to diagnose illness or begin a highly restrictive diet.