

FOOD INTOLERANCES & ALLERGIES

LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

The symptoms we often ignore

BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



Listening to Your Body

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One of the most common things I hear from clients is:

"I just don't feel like myself anymore."

When I ask them what they mean by that, the answers are often surprisingly similar.

"I'm always tired."

"I can't think clearly."

"My stomach seems to react to everything."

"I've got headaches most days."

"I just feel inflamed."

Many people have spent months, or even years, feeling this way. They've become so used to living with these symptoms that they've started to believe it's simply part of getting older, being busy or dealing with stress.

Sometimes they're right.

Life is demanding, and stress can have a huge impact on both our physical and emotional wellbeing.

But sometimes there's another piece to the puzzle.

Over the years, both through my own experiences and the work I do with clients, I've learned that our bodies are constantly communicating with us. The challenge is that we often become so busy listening to everyone else that we stop listening to ourselves.

This article isn't about convincing you that every symptom is caused by food. Far from it.

It's about encouraging you to become curious, to notice patterns and to recognise that persistent symptoms deserve attention rather than being dismissed.

Your Body Is Always Communicating

I often describe our bodies as having their own language.

They don't usually shout.

They whisper.

A little bloating after certain meals.

Feeling unusually tired every afternoon.

A headache that seems to appear for no obvious reason.

Skin that flares up without warning.

A mind that feels foggy when you desperately need to concentrate.

Each symptom, on its own, may not seem significant. But when you begin to notice patterns, they can tell an important story.

I've learned that becoming curious about those patterns is one of the most valuable things we can do for our health.

Symptoms That Are Easy to Dismiss

Brain Fog

Before I understood my own body better, I often blamed myself when I struggled to concentrate.

I thought I simply needed to try harder.

Brain fog can make you feel as though you're thinking through treacle. Words don't come as easily, concentration becomes difficult and even simple decisions can feel overwhelming.

There are many possible causes, including poor sleep, stress, hormonal changes, medication, vitamin deficiencies and neurological conditions.

For some people, food intolerances may also contribute.

The important thing is not to assume—it's to investigate thoughtfully.

Fatigue

Being tired has become almost a badge of honour in modern life.

People wear exhaustion as though it's expected.

But constantly feeling drained isn't something we should automatically accept.

If you're sleeping well yet waking feeling exhausted, it's worth exploring why.

Food may be one possible factor, alongside many others including stress, thyroid conditions, anaemia, sleep disorders or mental health.

Digestive Changes

This is often the symptom people notice first.

Bloating.

Wind.

Stomach pain.

Changes in bowel habits.

Indigestion.

Many people assume these are simply normal.

Occasional digestive symptoms are common.

Persistent digestive symptoms deserve attention.

Your digestive system works incredibly hard every day, and when something isn't quite right, it often tries to let you know.

Skin Changes

Our skin is our largest organ.

Sometimes it reflects what's happening inside our bodies.

Persistent eczema, itching or unexplained rashes can have many different causes, including allergies, skin conditions, environmental triggers and, in some people, reactions to certain foods.

Again, curiosity is key.

Headaches

Headaches can affect every aspect of life.

Stress is a common trigger.

So are dehydration, hormones, vision problems and muscle tension.

Some people also notice headaches occurring after eating particular foods.

Keeping a symptom diary can sometimes reveal patterns you hadn't noticed before.

Joint and Muscle Discomfort

People are often surprised when I mention this.

Occasionally, clients describe feeling generally achy or inflamed without understanding why.

There are many medical explanations for joint pain, and it's always important to rule these out.

However, some people notice improvements when they identify foods that don't suit them.

What I've Seen in Therapy

As a psychotherapist, I never assume food is the answer.

Mental health is complex.

Our wellbeing is influenced by our relationships, stress levels, hormones, sleep, trauma, physical health, neurodivergence, work, lifestyle and countless other factors.

But I've also noticed that when people begin paying attention to their physical symptoms alongside their emotional wellbeing, they often develop a much deeper understanding of themselves.

Instead of asking, "What's wrong with me?"

They begin asking, "What might my body be trying to tell me?"

That shift from judgement to curiosity can be incredibly empowering.

My Own Experience

Looking back, I can now recognise that my body had been giving me clues for years.

At the time, I didn't know how to interpret them.

I simply adapted.

I pushed through the fatigue.

I accepted digestive discomfort.

I assumed everyone felt like this.

As I gradually explored my own food intolerances, I wasn't looking for perfection or quick fixes.

I was looking for understanding.

Some foods suited me.

Others didn't.

Learning the difference wasn't about restriction—it was about giving my body what it needed to function at its best.

Before You Go...

If you've recognised yourself in any of these symptoms, please remember that symptoms are not diagnoses.

Feeling tired doesn't automatically mean you have a food intolerance.

Experiencing headaches doesn't necessarily point to something you've eaten.

Our bodies are wonderfully complex, and there are often many possible explanations for how we feel.

What matters is that persistent symptoms deserve to be explored rather than ignored.

If there's one thing I'd encourage you to do after reading this article, it's simply this:

Start listening.

Notice how you feel.

Keep a diary if it helps.

Look for patterns without becoming anxious about every symptom.

And if something doesn't feel right, speak to an appropriate healthcare professional.

Understanding your body isn't about becoming fearful.

It's about becoming informed.

The more we learn to listen with curiosity and compassion, the better equipped we are to support our own health and wellbeing.

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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.