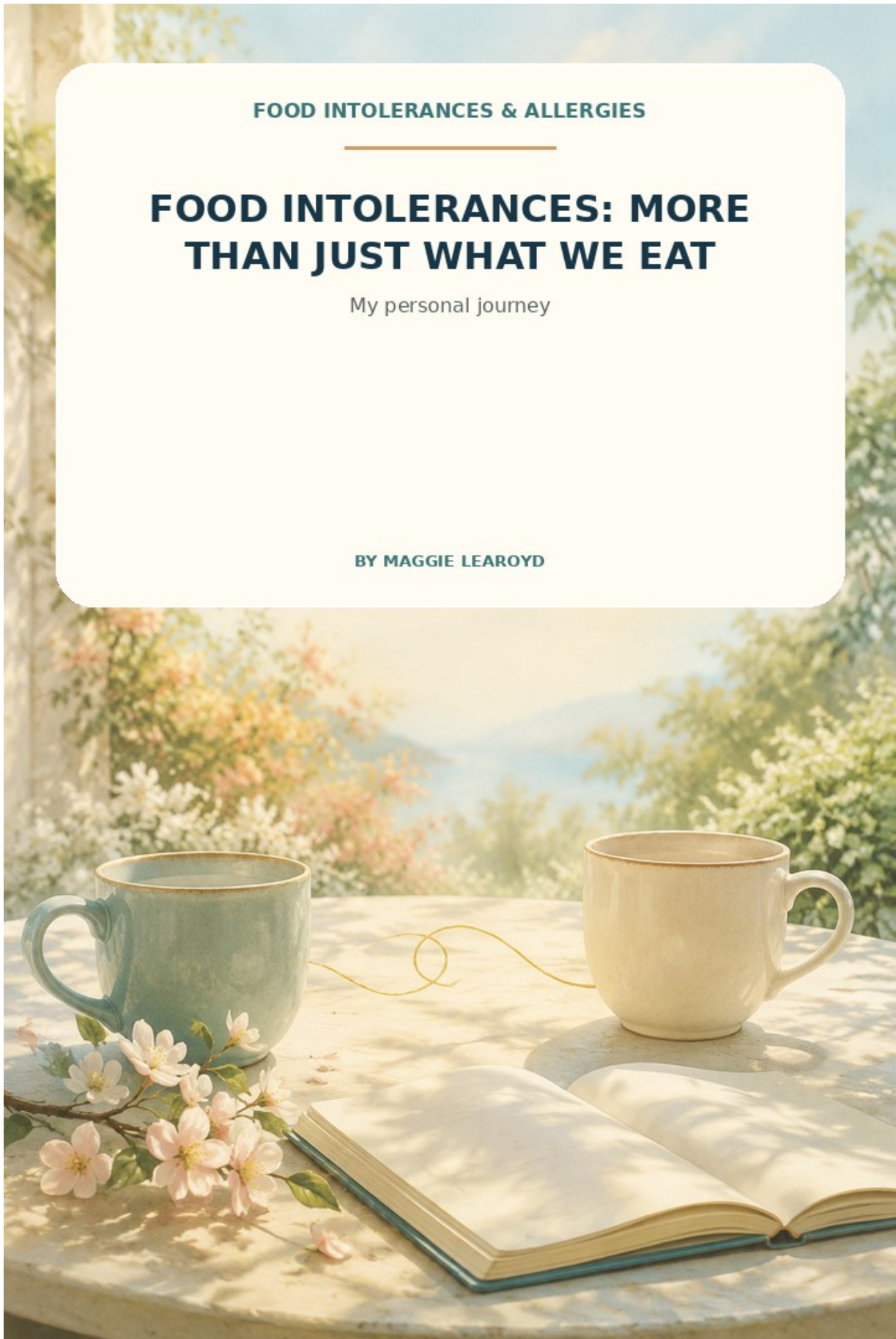


FOOD INTOLERANCES & ALLERGIES

FOOD INTOLERANCES: MORE THAN JUST WHAT WE EAT

My personal journey

BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



Food Intolerances: More Than Just What We Eat

My personal journey

For as long as I can remember, food has never been "just food."

I developed ARFID when I was nine years old, although at the time nobody knew what it was. People saw me as a fussy eater, difficult or simply unwilling to try new foods. Looking back now, with a diagnosis of autism and ADHD at the age of 50, so much of my relationship with food suddenly made sense.

Food wasn't about choice.

It was about sensory experiences, anxiety, predictability and feeling safe.

As I've grown older, my understanding has continued to evolve. Through my own experiences and the work I do with clients every day, I've become increasingly interested in how our bodies respond to the foods we eat. I began noticing patterns that couldn't easily be explained. Certain foods left me feeling exhausted, foggy-headed or physically unwell. Others affected my digestion, my energy, my concentration or even my mood.

Like many people, I wondered whether it was simply stress, getting older or something I was imagining.

It wasn't.

After exploring food intolerances more closely, many of those pieces finally began to fit together.

Why Food Intolerances Fascinate Me

One of the things I love most about my work is helping people become curious about themselves rather than critical of themselves.

Our bodies are constantly communicating with us, yet we're often taught to ignore the signals.

For some people, eating a particular food may lead to bloating or stomach discomfort. For others it might trigger headaches, fatigue, skin changes, brain fog or changes in mood. Some people notice their joints ache more, while others find they simply don't feel like themselves.

That doesn't automatically mean a food is "bad."

It may simply mean that your body responds differently.

I've learned that food intolerances are rarely about following the latest diet or removing endless foods. Instead, they're about understanding your own body and recognising that every person is unique.

What I've Learned Personally

Discovering some of my own food intolerances has helped me understand why I experienced certain symptoms for so many years.

It hasn't been about striving for perfection, because life rarely works like that. Instead, it's been about making informed choices and noticing how my body responds.

I've also realised how easy it is for people to feel dismissed when their symptoms don't show up on routine medical tests. Just because something isn't immediately obvious doesn't mean someone's experience isn't real.

As both a therapist and someone with lived experience, I believe we need to listen to people before we label them.

Working With Clients

Many of the people I support live with autism, ADHD, ARFID or chronic stress. While food intolerances aren't the cause of these conditions, they can sometimes add another layer of challenge.

I've worked with clients who felt constantly tired, struggled with concentration, experienced digestive discomfort or felt overwhelmed after eating certain foods. Sometimes exploring possible intolerances, alongside medical advice where appropriate, has helped them understand their bodies more clearly.

It's important to remember that food intolerances are only one part of the picture. Sleep, stress, hormones, medication, sensory processing, gut health and emotional wellbeing all influence how we feel.

That's why I always encourage people to look at the whole person rather than searching for a single explanation.

My Final Thoughts

If there's one thing my own journey has taught me, it's this:

Our bodies are incredibly intelligent.

They often tell us when something isn't quite right, but we need to slow down enough to listen.

Food should nourish us, not become something we fear. Understanding your own body isn't about restriction—it's about learning what helps you feel your best.

I hope that by sharing both my personal experiences and my professional knowledge, you'll feel encouraged to become curious about your own wellbeing.

You don't have to compare yourself with anyone else.

Your body has its own story to tell.

Sometimes, understanding begins with simply listening.

Maggie Learoyd

Psychotherapist | ADHD, Autism & ARFID Specialist

Founder of Space to Breathe Therapy

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.

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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.