

Bazaar

Harper's

ARABIA

JUNIOR

FUSS FREE
DINING

THE HOTTEST
DIVERSIONS
YOGA
VERSUS
BOUNCE

SENSATIONAL
SHOPPING

RALPH
LAUREN
KIDSWEAR
CHAMPION

NEW
season
STYLE

Wondrous winter trends

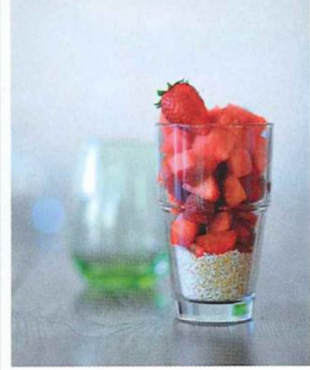
from head to toe, for girls and boys



NO FUSS NUTRITION

*Is your child food intolerant, allergic,
or just plain fussy? We dig up the facts on one
fast growing global problem*

Words by CORINNE DELPHY



Naughty versus nice. Avoiding intolerances can be a simple as eating a healthy, balanced diet



Current statistics approximate that around 8 children in 100 have a food allergy; with the numbers steadily rising. As more parents worry about the effects that certain foods are having on their kids, the truth is that in fact, only 1 in 5 reports of a food reaction are proven to be an allergy.

"Over the last few decades, people have been eating more processed foods. These sensitivities have become genetic, and are being passed on to our children," says Dubai-based nutritionist Caroline Biernert. "Eating badly is a global problem."

But what is the difference between a food allergy and a food intolerance? The answer is fairly simple – the symptoms of food intolerance occur usually a few hours after eating the food. Allergic reactions happen much more quickly. With an allergy, even a tiny amount of the food can cause an allergic reaction to take place. Some people with a severe allergy to nuts might suffer anaphylaxis after eating something made in a factory that also handles nuts, or after touching someone who has recently eaten nuts. With food intolerances you need a lot more of the food to cause the symptoms. Finally, food intolerances are never life-threatening, while some allergies can be potentially fatal.

A food allergy is caused when the body's immune system reacts abnormally to specific foods, while an intolerance, while not affecting the immune system, can cause considerable problems and significant symptoms. "There can be many signs that your child is reacting to a food; bloating, tiredness, diarrhoea and fussiness," says Caroline. "Don't worry if the signs occur short term. But, if you see this happening regularly, try to start a food diary and write down everything your child eats and how it affects them. This will help a dietician or nutritionist to determine if your child is food sensitive."

Don't go gung ho at this stage and begin to eliminate foods you think may be affecting your child, as this can lead to further problems. If you think your child has a food allergy, you should seek medical advice. Usually your GP would be the first point of call. Expect them to conduct a skin prick test and blood tests to determine the causes.

You may be referred to a consultant in hospital (often an immunologist or an allergist), for further tests to confirm diagnosis. This is usually the case if your child has unfortunately suffered a severe allergic reaction, or they're not growing well or have gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhoea.

THE LATEST FOOD STATS

An international collaboration of scientists has found that young teenagers in particular are nearly 40% more likely to have severe asthma if they eat burgers and other types of fast food more than three times a week.

Children aged six to seven had an increased risk of 27%.

Children eating fast food were also more likely to get severe eczema and rhinitis – a condition where the nose blocks or runs and the eyes are itchy and water.

The good news is that eating fruit appears to protect young people from asthma and allergies. Eating three or more portions a week reduces the severity of the symptoms by 11% among teenagers and 14% among younger children. As the immune system matures and a child gets older, many grow out of allergies to eggs, wheat, milk and soya. Adults with food allergy may also grow out of their food allergy if an elimination diet is followed carefully. About a third of adults and children lose their reactions after 1-2 years of elimination diets. Allergic reactions to peanuts, seafood, fish and tree nuts rarely get better.

If you suspect a food intolerance, the severity of symptoms will dictate how promptly you will require medical advice. In milder, less clear-cut situations, it is often worth spending some time yourself trying to work out which foodstuff is the culprit.

Lactose intolerance is one of the most common. This causes diarrhoea and abdominal symptoms (bloating and pain) after milk is drunk or dairy products are eaten. It happens because of a deficiency of lactase, an enzyme in the body that digests lactose (the sugar) in milk. Unless lactose is broken down, the body cannot absorb it. You can be born without any lactase, or only a low level, or you can develop lactase deficiency – often after an episode of gastroenteritis. "If you have to avoid all dairy products," says Caroline. "Instead try all sheep and goat milk products, available at an organic supermarket, for example." Similarly for cases of gluten intolerance, another problem that seems to be increasingly under the health spotlight, Caroline advocates replacing wheat and spelt products with quinoa, sweet potatoes, brown rice, millet and buckwheat. Which all just means that you have to get a little more creative in the kitchen.

Of course, there are certain foods and chemicals in foods that may directly affect the body and cause pronounced symptoms – especially in children. Food additives like monosodium glutamate, often found in takeaway foods, causes flushing, headaches, abdominal pains and bloating. However, the exact way in which foods and additives may cause symptoms is often not clear. There is particular controversy over whether certain additives (E numbers) are responsible for various symptoms. Their effects are usually immediately visible in your child – but their long term influence, including how they affect our immunity as adults isn't fully documented.

Children are particularly susceptible to developing physical symptoms as a psychological reaction to food they dislike; in this case it can be hard to determine whether the symptoms are a result of an actual food intolerance or not. Caroline offers some helpful advice. "I cannot emphasise enough how abundant the world of food actually is. Together with your child, discover the most

healthy options including lots of green veggies! Too many people feed their children products with too much sugar, wheat and dairy, too much junk food and no variety in their meals. Food is your daily energy and health source. It gives you power and decides if you stay healthy or becoming ill, if you live a long or short life. Eating is a lifestyle decision."