

Low Histamine Diet

Do you need to start following a low-histamine diet? It can seem overwhelming at first, but we promise it's not as hard as you think. Many people with ME/CFS have symptoms of histamine intolerance. When your body produces too much histamine, the high histamine levels in certain foods can cause symptom flares. Some foods are lower in histamine themselves, but they can cause a release of histamine in your body, which can cause worsening symptoms.

The goal of a low histamine diet is not to cut out histamines in food completely. That would be nearly impossible and could lead to malnutrition. Instead, the goal is to pay attention to what foods are making you symptomatic and try to eat foods that contain smaller levels of histamine whenever possible. **Here are some foods that are low in histamine:**

- Gluten-free grains like amaranth, arrowroot, buckwheat, millet, rice, quinoa, and more.
- Fresh meat that has not been aged.
- Salmon: Only fresh or flash-frozen within 30 minutes of catch.
- Non-citrus fruits like apples, blueberries, mangoes, peaches, pomegranates, and more. Avoid grapefruit, lemon, lime, and orange.
- Non-dairy milk like almond, coconut, or hemp.
- Fresh vegetables; **avoid tomato, avocado, eggplant, squash, and spinach.**
- Olive oil
- Coconut oil
- Almonds
- Potatoes
- Flax
- Chia
- If you tolerate milk: butter, ghee, cream, cream cheese, ricotta, mozzarella, and other soft cheeses that have not been aged or fermented.

The fresher, the better when it comes to low histamine levels in food. The goal is to try and avoid processed foods whenever possible.

Some foods can be either high in histamine themselves or can cause a release of histamine in the body. **Here are some of the top offenders:**

- Aged/fermented cheese like parmesan, blue cheese, brie, etc. Avoid any other hard, blue, or stinky cheeses.
- Alcohol, especially beer and wine.
- Artificial colors and flavoring
- Avocado
- Certain fruits: Kiwi, pineapple, papaya, strawberries, passionfruit, plum, and bananas.
- Certain nuts – peanuts, walnuts, cashews.
- Certain seasonings – allspice, anise, cinnamon, chili powder, clove, curry powder, cayenne, msg, nutmeg, paprika.
- Chocolate
- Citrus - lemon, lime, grapefruit, orange.
- Dried fruit
- Eggplant
- Eggs, especially raw egg white.
- Fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, tempeh, yogurt, kefir, sourdough, etc.
- Fish, especially if canned.
- Flavored milk
- Leftovers that have not been frozen
- Legumes – beans, chickpeas, soybeans, peanuts, etc. Especially if canned.
- Licorice
- Pickled/vinegar-containing foods like pickles, olives, mustard, ketchup, etc.
- Probiotics
- Processed or aged meat like hot dogs, sausage, deli meat, jerky, canned meat, etc.
- Shellfish
- Soured milk products like sour cream and buttermilk.
- Soy and soy products – soy sauce, soybeans, soy lecithin, tofu, etc.
- Spinach
- Squash
- Tomatoes
- Unpasteurized milk including goat and sheep.
- Wheat

I know this seems like a lot of information, but, the goal is **not** to eliminate these completely from your diet. The goal is to eat smaller amounts of them and pay attention to how you feel after you eat these foods. If you feel worse after eating any of these high-histamine foods, then you know to limit your consumption of said foods.

You may feel fine after eating food considered to be high in histamine, and you may become symptomatic after a food considered to be low in histamine. Tolerance varies from person to person.

Listen to your body and always make sure to eat enough food. Your caloric intake should not change drastically with this diet. Make sure you are eating balanced and nutritious meals. If you begin to feel worse on this diet or have any new symptoms, always reach out to your doctor.

Google, Pinterest, and YouTube are great resources for finding low-histamine recipe ideas.

Keeping a food diary during this process can also be helpful. It helps you to track what you eat and any symptoms you experience. Here is a template that could be helpful:

<https://www.histamineintolerance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/food-diary.pdf>

Helpful link:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/low-histamine-diet#other-tips>

The Chronic Fatigue (ME/CFS) Clinic at Johns Hopkins

Peter Rowe, MD

Alba Azola, MD

Samantha Lemmon, CRNP

Renee Swope, RN

Meghan Swope, CCMA

Revised April 2025.