

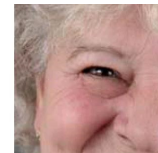


Four daily drinks raise cancer risk: Study

Men who down more than four alcoholic drinks in a day may have a heightened risk of stomach cancer, a large European analysis suggests. The heavier drinkers' odds of developing stomach cancer over a decade were twice those of light drinkers (who had about half a drink per day or less). — REUTERS

Soy compound may reduce crow's feet in women

An experimental supplement derived from soy may help postmenopausal women smooth their "crow's feet" a bit, a small pilot study suggests. The compound, S-equol, is created naturally in the body and is believed to attach to estrogen receptors. Skin cells are among those that have estrogen receptors, and it's thought that women's waning estrogen levels after menopause may contribute to skin aging. — REUTERS



TUMMY TROUBLES

Food intolerances leave a sour taste



MARILYN LINTON
Special to QMI Agency

Eat this, don't eat that!

Losing weight used to be the sole focus of celebrity diets, but today it's all about food intolerance. Celebs everywhere are claiming that cutting out milk, meat, wheat or whatever can cure every-

thing from bloating to tiredness to various aches and pains. Could we give up sugar, as did Gwyneth Paltrow? Should we embrace the raw a la Demi Moore?

We all know people who have knocked a couple of foods or even food groups off their diet plans and studies have shown that celebs are to be blamed for the rise in awareness of so-called food intolerances.

One study by a British allergy organization estimated that 45% of Brits claimed they suffer from some kind of food intolerance. But another study involving 250 GPs suggests the majority of doctors believe their patients' food intolerance beliefs were all in their heads.

But whether you call these "designer disorders" or "make-believe afflictions" doesn't really matter. A recent report from companiesandmarkets.com notes that the global market for food allergy and intolerance products is projected to hit \$26 billion by 2017.

Just how do you know whether your food intolerance is real or imagined? Start

by ruling out food allergies, say experts.

Toronto's Dr. Gordon Ko is no stranger to food issues at the Fibromyalgia Integrative Treatment Clinic at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre where he works. He notes the average person has six or seven food intolerances, but people often don't know the difference between a food allergy and intolerance.

"A food allergy in the traditional sense is IgE mediated, which means it is immediate and potentially life-threatening," says Ko. "On the other hand, food intolerance is slow to develop and takes hours or days."

The difference is a crucial one. An allergic reaction is triggered by something (bee sting or peanuts, say) that sends a message to your immune system to produce IgE antibodies as a potential defence.

A food intolerance does not involve the immune system though Ko believes food intolerances involve antibodies called IgGs which involve "a delayed type of reaction that presents hours or days later as malaise, an irritable bowel, fatigue or headache."

He says that nearly half of fibromyalgia patients have associated irritable bowel syndrome which may be food-related. When one patient who presented with terrible back pain tried everything with no success but was eventually helped when a food intolerance was pinpointed, Ko says it "opened

What's the difference?

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (aaaai.org):

- A food intolerance response takes place in the gastrointestinal system, and occurs when you are unable to properly break down a particular food.
- A food allergic reaction involves the immune system which overreacts to a certain food and can cause a serious reaction on the skin, or in digestive or respiratory tracts.

my eyes" to the subject of food sensitivity.

Ko looks for inflammation markers in the blood as one method of testing for possible problems; he also has confidence in the YorkTest Food-Scan Program, a \$700 kit (canlabs.ca) he has used with patients at the Canadian Centre for Integrative Medicine in Markham, Ont., where he also practices.

Toronto naturopath Caroline Meyer also reports that food intolerances are a common concern today. Although she uses some food tolerance testing kits, she says blood testing for food intolerances is "a work in progress."

"Most naturopathic doctors would look at the research behind a particular kit. You have to be cautious about whether there is independent research that is offered," Meyer says. "There is no perfect test out there, but there are testing facilities that I have confidence in."

Because kits are expensive,

Meyer, a supervisor at Toronto's Schad Naturopathic Clinic, will often work with her patients on elimination diets. While they can be difficult to commit to, eliminating certain foods for weeks or months to see if symptoms improve can be worthwhile, she says.

"It's a bit more of a trial and error. But sometimes when you can avoid a certain food, the immune system finds its own balance," she says.

"I often find people can introduce that food later on. They may not be able to eat wheat, say, three times a day anymore but they may be able to tolerate it once a day."

As for fad diets that eliminate one food group or another with the promise of nirvana, she urges patients who have lingering symptoms and who think that food may be playing a role to eat a balanced diet and to seek professional advice from someone with a solid knowledge in nutrition.

"Unfortunately, there is no one healthy diet that fits all."