

Elimination Diet for EoE

Patient Education

What Is Eosinophilic Esophagitis (EoE)?

EoE is a long-term problem with the esophagus—the tube that carries food from your mouth to your stomach. In EoE, a type of white blood cell called an eosinophil builds up in the esophagus, where it is not normally found. These cells cause swelling and irritation that can make swallowing hard over time. EoE is a chronic (lifelong) condition. There is no one-time cure, but it can be well controlled with treatment.

What Are the Symptoms?

In adults:

- Hard or painful swallowing
- Food getting stuck in the throat or chest
- Heartburn that does not get better with medicine

In children:

- Trouble swallowing or feeding
- Feeling sick to the stomach or throwing up
- Belly pain

How Is EoE Treated?

There are a few ways to treat EoE:

- **Medicines:** These include swallowed steroids (a liquid or spray that coats the esophagus), acid-reducing medicines called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), and a newer medicine called dupilumab (Dupixent), which is a shot given under the skin that helps calm the swelling.
- **Diet changes:** Removing certain foods from the diet to find out which ones are causing the problem.

Your doctor will help you choose. Importantly, EoE treatment is usually ongoing. Even when symptoms improve, swelling can quietly continue and lead to scarring or narrowing, so follow-up and staying on treatment matter.

Why Does Diet Matter?

In many people, specific foods trigger the eosinophils to build up in the esophagus. When those foods are found and removed, symptoms and swelling often improve.

One important point: standard allergy tests (skin-prick or blood tests) do not reliably find EoE food triggers. EoE is not the same as a typical food allergy. That is why triggers are found by carefully removing foods and then adding them back—not by an allergy test.

What Is an Elimination Diet?

An elimination diet means you stop eating certain foods for a while to see if your symptoms improve. The 6 most common food triggers in EoE are:

1. Milk (dairy)
2. Wheat
3. Eggs
4. Soy
5. Peanuts and tree nuts
6. Fish and shellfish

Milk, wheat, and eggs are the most common triggers.

Two Ways to Do the Diet

There are two main approaches. Your doctor will help you choose the best one:

- **Step-up approach** (usually tried first): Start by removing just 1 food (most often milk) or 2 foods (milk and wheat). If symptoms and swelling do not improve, remove more foods over time. This is less restrictive, and studies show starting with fewer foods often works about as well as removing many foods at once—while being easier to live with.
- **Top-down approach (6-food elimination)** — Remove all 6 food groups at once. After symptoms improve, add foods back one or two groups at a time to find the trigger. This approach is stricter but may work faster for some people.

How Does the Process Work?

1. EoE is found by a scope test (endoscopy) and tissue samples (biopsies).
2. You and your doctor choose a diet plan.
3. You follow the diet for 8–12 weeks.
4. A scope test is done to check if the esophagus looks better.
5. If things have improved, foods are added back one or two groups at a time, each for about 6 weeks.
6. A scope test is done after each food is added back.
7. This continues until all food groups have been tested. There may be more than one trigger food.

During the time you are adding foods back, try to eat the test food every day. This process takes many months and requires several scope tests. But it can help find the real cause of the problem and may lead to long-term relief without medicine.

What Foods Should You Avoid on a 6-Food Elimination Diet?

- Milk and all dairy products
- Wheat and wheat-containing foods
- Eggs
- Soy
- Peanuts and tree nuts
- Fish and shellfish

Allergen foods and ingredients that should be AVOIDED while on the diet:

Food Group	Foods to Avoid	Ingredients to Avoid
Milk/Dairy	Butter Buttermilk Caramel Cheese Cottage Cheese Cream Cream cheese Curds Custard Dry milk Evaporated milk Frozen Yogurt Ghee Half and Half Ice Cream Milk (cow, goat, sheep) Milk chocolate Nougat Pudding Powdered milk Semi-Sweet chocolate Sour Cream Sweetened Condensed milk Yogurt	Butter flavoring Casein Casein hydrolysate Caseinates (all forms) Diacetyl Lactalbumin Lactoferrin Lactose Lactulose Milk protein hydrolysate Rennet Casein Tagatose Whey (all forms)
Wheat	Bread Breadcrumbs Bulgur Cereals Crackers Couscous Farina Farro Flour tortillas Kamut Pasta Pizza crust Puffed wheat	Durum Einkorn All wheat flours Hydrolyzed wheat protein Seitan Semolina Spelt Sprouted wheat Triticale Vital wheat gluten Wheat (bran, berries, germ, gluten, grass, malt, sprouts, starch)

Soy	Edamame Miso Natto Soya Soy products (cheese, ice cream, milk, and yogurt) Soybean Soy nuts Soy sauce Tamari Tempeh Tofu Quorn	Soy Soy fiber Soy flour Soy protein (concentrate, hydrolyzed, isolate) Textured vegetable protein (TVP)
Eggs	Eggs (dried, powdered, whole) Egg whites/substitute Eggnog Egg sauces (Bearnaise/Hollandaise sauce) Mayonnaise Meringue	Albumin (albumen) Globulin Livetin Lysozyme Words starting with “ovo” or “ova” Vitellin
Peanut/Treenut	All types of nuts All types of nut milks All types of nut spreads Artificial nuts Lychee Pesto	Marzipan/almond paste Nut extracts (almond extract) Nut flours (almond, peanut) Nut paste Nut pieces Peanut oil (cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil) Peanut protein hydrolysate
Fish/Shellfish	All types of fish Barnacle Caviar Clams, mussels Crab Crawfish Krill Lobster Octopus Oysters Scallops Shrimp, prawns Snails (escargot) Squid (calamari)	Bouillabaisse Caesar dressing Fish oil/fish oil supplements Fish sauce Fish stock/sauce Seafood flavoring Surimi Worcestershire sauce

*All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain a “major food allergen” (milk, wheat, soy, egg, peanuts/ tree nuts, and fish/ shellfish) as an ingredient are required by law to list that allergen on the food label.

What CAN You Eat?

There are still lots of foods you can enjoy:

Meats and Proteins:

- Chicken
- Beef
- Pork
- Turkey
- Lamb
- Game Meats
- Beans (not soy)
- Lentils
- Split Peas
- Legumes

Grains and Starches:

- Rice (brown, white, wild)
- Potatoes (white, red, sweet)
- Quinoa
- Millet
- Amaranth
- Buckwheat
- Gluten-free oats

Fruits and Vegetables:

- All fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables

Seeds and Oils:

- Sunflower seeds
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sesame seeds
- Avocado oil
- Olive oil
- Coconut oil
- Sunflower oil
- Canola oil

Dairy-Free Milks:

- Rice milk
- Coconut milk
- Oat milk
- Hemp milk
- Pea protein milk

Other:

- Sweeteners
- Vinegar
- Spices
- Water
- Coffee
- Tea
- Soda
- Sparkling water
- Juice

Work With a Dietitian

A registered dietitian who knows food allergies and gut health can help you get complete nutrition, read labels, and plan meals and snacks so the diet is safe and doable.

Allergen-Friendly Brands

These companies make products that may work for a 6-food elimination diet:

Flours and Baking:

- Arrowhead Mills: Gluten-free products

- Bob's Red Mill: Gluten-free baking mixes, grains, and seeds
- Cherry Brook Kitchen: Baking mixes free of some food allergens
- Cravings Place: Baking mixes free of the top 8 allergens
- King Arthur: Gluten-free baking mixes
- Namaste Foods: Baking mixes and pasta meals free of wheat, gluten, soy, dairy, and peanut/tree nuts

Dairy Substitutes:

- Daiya: Cheese, yogurt, and more, free of the top 8 allergens
- Earth Balance: Vegan, gluten-free mayo and margarine (soy-free and egg-free options available)
- So Delicious: Dairy-free products (choose coconut and oat options only)
- Pacific Foods: Dairy-free drinks (choose hemp, rice, or coconut options only)
- Soy-Free Veganaise: Soy-free and egg-free mayo
- Ripple: Pea protein milk

Bread, Pasta, and Cereals:

- Food for Life: Gluten-free products
- Bfree: Bread, rolls, and wraps free of soy, gluten, dairy, eggs, and nuts
- Eden Foods: Grains and 100% buckwheat noodles
- Ener-G: Gluten-free and vegan products

Snacks:

- Enjoy Life Foods: Snack bars, cookies, granola, and chocolate free of the top 8 allergens
- SunButter: Seed spread, gluten-free and nut-free
- 88 Acres: Seed spreads, bars, and granola free of the top 8 allergens

Frozen and Quick Meals:

- Allergaroo: Microwavable pasta dishes free of wheat, milk, soy, egg, fish/shellfish, peanut/tree nut, and mustard
- Ian's Natural Foods: Frozen meals and snacks free of wheat, gluten, milk, eggs, nuts, and soy

Meal and Snack Ideas

Breakfast:

- Oatmeal or cream of rice cereal with fruit
- BFree or Food for Life toast with 2 tablespoons SunButter or jelly
- Rice Chex cereal with rice milk and ½ cup blueberries
- Banana pancakes: Use a gluten-free pancake mix, add ½ mashed banana, and cook as directed. Top with pure maple syrup.
- Coconut milk yogurt topped with berries
- Smoothie: 1 cup fruit (fresh or frozen), 1 cup rice or coconut milk, ½ cup coconut yogurt, 1 scoop brown rice protein powder

Lunch and Dinner:

- Rice bowl: Rice topped with grilled chicken, lettuce, salsa, and guacamole. Drizzle with olive oil and fresh lime juice.
- Tacos: Ground meat or beans in a corn tortilla, topped with lettuce, salsa, and avocado
- Spaghetti with gluten-free pasta and ground beef or turkey (or mushrooms)

- Stuffed peppers: Cook ground turkey or beef with salt and pepper. Mix with cooked rice or quinoa. Stuff into peppers and bake until soft.
- Homemade soup: Chicken and rice, vegetable, chili, tomato, black bean, or lentil
- "PB&J" sandwich: Use SunButter instead of peanut butter on allergen-friendly bread

Snacks:

- Rice cake with SunButter
- Hummus or bean dip with veggies, rice crackers, or corn chips
- Guacamole or salsa with veggies, rice crackers, or corn chips
- Fresh fruit or applesauce
- Vegetables
- Homemade granola bars with gluten-free oats and dried fruit
- Popcorn
- Half a sandwich on BFree or Food for Life bread with sliced chicken, lettuce, and tomato

If you have any additional questions, please contact our office.

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