

What is the Difference Between Food Allergies, Intolerances, and Sensitivities?

There are three types of non-toxic (not food poisoning) adverse food reactions:

1. **Allergies** - "IgE mediated" Type I (Immediate Onset) Immune reaction, which basically means that only IgE antibodies are produced and therefore the onset of the reaction occurs within minutes to hours of ingesting a food. It is usually severe in nature (e.g. anaphylaxis). There is often a genetic predisposition, and children are most susceptible to this type of reaction.
2. **Intolerances** - Non-immune reactions such as: an enzyme deficiency (e.g. lactose or fructose intolerance); a chemical reaction (e.g. flavor enhancer MSG or preservative sulphites); a neurotoxic reaction (e.g. glutamate containing foods); and/or a pharmacological reaction (e.g. salicylate containing foods).
3. **Sensitivities** - "Non-IgE mediated" Type III (Delayed Hypersensitivity) Immune reaction, which means that other antibodies and immune mediators are produced (i.e. IgA, IgG, IgM, cytokines, etc.). (For example, gluten sensitivity is a recognized diagnosis. The criteria for diagnosis includes elevated IgG and IgA antibodies to gliadin, a gluten protein.) These types of food reactions are usually difficult to identify because they develop over days and weeks, therefore symptoms may be chronic and low grade in nature.