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# When People Are Sensitive to Everything – A Clinical Primer

by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD

So many people, especially with fibromyalgia, are incredibly sensitive to any treatments – even to herbals, nutrients, their environment, and sometimes even cell phone and other electromagnetic (EMF) frequencies. This makes it tricky to take anything to recover. Here's how they can take the needed treatments you recommend.

In this article we will discuss some of the major triggers for severe environmental and treatment sensitivities, including food and multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). We will begin with mast cell activation and food sensitivities, as these treatments are easy, low-cost, and often highly effective.

When problems persist, that's the time to consider looking for and treating mycotoxins (mold toxins) and the Lyme co-infection Bartonella. I strongly recommend reading the book *Toxic* by my friend, Dr. Neil Nathan.

Ready to start with some simple fixes?

## Mast Cell Activation

Mast cells are our body's "first responders" when making contact with things in the outside world. If they meet something in the environment that concerns them, they can pour out over 200 chemicals. The most prominent of these is histamine. This is one reason why antihistamines are a mainstay of treating allergies.

Just like our immune system in fibromyalgia can be on overdrive in general, in some people this is also occurring for their mast cells. These

guardians then have an itchy trigger finger, seemingly reacting to things at random.

Random is the key word here, and this helps distinguish mast cell activation from regular allergies and sensitivities.

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## Easy treatments for mast cell activation and food sensitivities reduce severe environmental sensitivities.

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One day people may have no reaction to something, but they react excessively to the same trigger on other days. So, no problem eating an ear of corn one day; but the next day, they may have the sudden onset of flushing, nausea, diarrhea, sweating, or palpitations.

Testing is usually not helpful for this condition. As about half of Fibro folks with sensitivities have mast cell activation and treatment is simple, it's better to simply try these and see if they help.

## Treatment

I usually begin in the following order:

1. Quercetin. I start with 500 mg a day. If their main sensitivities are to foods, give it about 30 minutes before major meals so it can be in place when they eat. This simple supplement can often be very, very helpful and is low-cost. After a few days, you can increase to 500 mg (or even 1000 mg) two-to-four times daily.
2. Montelukast (Singulair), 10 mg at bedtime. This prescription asthma medication is only \$0.30 a day using the Good Rx phone app.

3. Loratadine (Claritin), 10 mg in the morning. If this over-the-counter medication causes sedation, they can use it at bedtime or try cetirizine (Zyrtec). If they have any other side effects to these medications, it is

likely caused by the binders or fillers rather than the medication itself. In that case, try a different brand or have it made by a compounding pharmacy without the fillers. If this medication helps, consider diphenhydramine (Benadryl) 12.5 – 50 mg bedtime.

4. Some people will get additional benefits by adding ranitidine (Zantac) 150 mg twice a day, famotidine (Pepcid) 20 mg twice a day, or even cimetidine (Tagamet) 150 – 300 mg twice daily. These acid-blocking medications are actually also antihistamines.

- Do not use the other acid-blocking medications (called PPIs). They will not help here and are quite toxic long-term, likely causing over 30,000 US deaths yearly.
- Tagamet, Pepcid, and Zantac have the additional benefit of modifying immune function quite dramatically in ways that can be beneficial, especially against Epstein-Barr virus. In fact, I have seen Tagamet knock out acute cases of Epstein-Barr (mono) in less than 24 hours. This was a tip taught to me by Dr. Jay Goldstein.



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- The downside is that they turn off stomach acid production as well, and the body needs stomach acid to digest food. The cimetidine can be the best choice of these three for long-term use in this regard. But see which one works best.
  - These medications may work within days, but it may take up to two months to see the full effect
5. The supplement DAO (Umbrellex) taken 15 – 30 minutes before eating can be helpful but costs about a dollar per capsule. But worth a try. DAO contains the enzyme diamine oxidase, which helps break down histamine. Starting with one capsule taken thirty minutes before a meal, the dosage can be increased to two to three capsules before each meal.
  6. Cromolyn (Rx – gastrocom) ampules (100 mg in 5 mL), one before each meal, can be quite effective for histamine reactions from food but is often not insurance covered. With the Good Rx app, they are about a \$1.60 per ampule.
  7. In persistent severe cases, consider a low histamine diet (these can be found online); but this is quite a nuisance, and I rarely use it.

### Food Sensitivities

Many people find that they have a number of food sensitivities. They find themselves limiting their diet, and then sometimes find themselves becoming sensitive to the few foods they could eat. They find that they, over time, have painted themselves into a corner where there is nothing left to eat.

There are three main things that trigger food sensitivities:

1. Incomplete digestion of proteins because of not enough stomach acid or digestive enzymes.
2. Leaky gut from infections, especially candida, and other causes. Anti-inflammatory arthritis medications such as ibuprofen are major triggers.
3. Adrenal fatigue.

Our digestive system is one of the main borders between ourselves and

the outside world. Because of this, our immune system patrols our gut pretty aggressively. When eating food, especially proteins, the border guards check to make sure that these have been broken down to their component amino acids.

Here is an analogy that may be helpful for those you treat: “You can think of proteins as being long sentences made up of letters called amino acids. The letters by themselves have no meaning but are important building blocks that the body uses to make a wide array of necessary things. But if you absorb a long string of letters (i.e. an incompletely digested protein) into your blood, your body has to treat it like an outside invader. Then you develop sensitivities to the food.

“Therefore, if your digestion does not completely break down the food, or if your border patrol is not doing its job and letting in an incompletely digested food (called “leaky gut”), your body will react. Normally, this reaction is tempered by a healthy adrenal gland. When your adrenal gland is fatigued, however, you then have the perfect triad for developing food allergies.

“When you limit your diet, you then get large amounts of just a few foods. Your digestive system is made to break down a wide array of foods; and if your diet is limited, you are more likely to have incomplete digestion of those few foods. Then you get sensitive to them as well.”

### Sensitivity Versus Allergy

Medically, these are two very different things. Allergy is when a specific part of your immune system is getting triggered (e.g. – IgE antibodies and histamine). Sensitivities reflect a more generic term for your body and immune system reacting adversely to something.

Most people have food sensitivities and not allergies. Sadly, most physicians are unfamiliar with food sensitivities and often believe they don’t exist.

### Food Allergy Testing

Most food allergy blood tests are, in my humble opinion, worse than useless. A study done at Bastyr University

showed that if you have three tubes of blood drawn, and send them to the same lab (fibbing and writing different names on the three tubes), the results will come back showing the person to be allergic to about 20 to 30 foods. But each lab result will show a totally different mix of food allergies – even though all three tubes were drawn from the same person at the same time!

I would note that one lab founded by Dr. Russell Jaffe ([www.elisaact.com](http://www.elisaact.com)) seems to have avoided the problems with the results being random.

If people have already had them done, I tell them to ignore the results of these tests, especially if they were IgG antibody tests. The exception would be if **only** IgE testing was done. This would be clearly shown on the lab report. In that case, most people have no positive results. If something shows positive, it is a true food *allergy* and that food needs to be avoided. But this test will not look for food *sensitivities*.

My preferred approach to testing? Muscle testing (see below) in the hands of somebody experienced in the technique can be very reliable.

An elimination diet is most reliable, but a nuisance. You can find a “kinder and gentler” elimination diet at [www.vitality101.com](http://www.vitality101.com) (search on “Rapp Elimination Diet”).

### Eliminating Food Sensitivities

Although allergy shots can be very effective for inhalant allergens like pollen, they’re not very effective for food sensitivities. But there is a technique that is gentle yet very powerful. This is called the Nambudripad Allergy Elimination Technique (NAET; See [www.NAET.com](http://www.NAET.com)).

NAET uses muscle testing (called applied kinesiology) to test for sensitivities. Looking at it, my first reaction as a scientist was that there was no way on earth this testing or treatment could possibly work. In fact, until my early 40s, I suffered with severe hay fever (ragweed allergy). I met an NAET practitioner who said that she could get rid of it in 20 minutes. Being an all-knowing doctor, I told her, “Leave me alone. That voodoo can’t help me!”

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A few weeks later, when I was especially miserable, she said, “Stop being a nitwit and let me treat you.” Twenty minutes later, my hay fever was gone, never to return.

One of my mentors, Dr. Janet Travell, used to say “first see what is going on before you need to understand it. Otherwise, you will never see anything unexpected.” As a physician, however, unfortunately we are more likely to follow Winston Churchill’s quote. “We often stumble over the truth. Fortunately, we get up, brush ourselves off, and quickly walk away before any real harm is done!”

Keeping both of those thoughts in mind is part of what got me into trouble as a physician. Instead of closing my eyes to what happened, and then quickly walking away, I flew to California to meet Dr. Devi Nambudripad, MD, PhD, RN, DC, LAc. Despite all the letters after her name, I found her to be brilliant, with no ego. I studied her technique and was so impressed that I went back home to Annapolis and married the woman who had used it to eliminate my hay fever!

Years later, I found that the technique often caused autism to resolve. Our foundation then funded, and I was chief investigator on, a study using NAET to treat autism. By the end of one year, 23 of the 30 autistic children were back in regular school as opposed

to zero of the 30 in the control group. We published this study, and a large double-blind placebo-controlled study is currently underway. For those of you who know any autistic children, you can find information on how to enroll in the study at [www.NAET.com](http://www.NAET.com).

NAET works brilliantly. The mechanism is not clear, but it seems to reset the immune system so that it no longer sees that food as an enemy. Kind of like hitting the “restore factory defaults” setting on your computer when it goes on the fritz.

I recommend 15 treatments to address each of the 15 major food groups. If it is not clearly helping by the end of 15 treatments, it is not likely to help. Practitioners can be found at [www.NAET.com](http://www.NAET.com). Most practitioners are not on the website though, so do a search online for people in your area. If you find one on the website though, they are more likely to be more experienced.

I have seen NAET by itself eliminate fibromyalgia in some people with severe sensitivities.

To prevent the food sensitivities from coming back, it is important to take a good **plant-based** digestive enzyme and something to enhance stomach acid (e.g. a vinegar-based salad dressing) with larger meals; eliminate gut Candida and other infections; and address the adrenal fatigue. My favorite supplements for adrenal fatigue are Adrenaplex and Adaptra (both by EuroMedica).

Simply put, easy and rather remarkable treatments!

### Molds and Mycotoxins (Mold Toxins)

When severe sensitivities persist, especially if associated with marked anxiety, consider mold toxins.

This concept was initially formulated by Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker, author of *Mold Warriors*. Ritchie is so bright as to be almost unintelligible in his complexity. His work has been synthesized and simplified by Dr. Neil Nathan, author of the exceptional book *Toxic*. If you decide to explore mold toxin treatment further, I highly recommend reading this book.

This is not a diagnosis I entertain lightly, saving it for when other treatments fail. The main problem is that if urine testing suggests high levels of the mold toxins, a very expensive Pandora box is being opened for the person being treated. My concern is that I still do not know what percent of healthy people test positive on mold urine testing, so we do not know the specificity of the test – meaning that it may be positive but not a problem. Then the person is forced into home mold remediation, which is difficult and can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Meanwhile, urine testing for mold toxins costs about \$400 – \$700 each time they are checked, and this is usually not insurance covered.

But when mycotoxins are the root problem, they do need to be addressed. If you are interested in a short article I have written that simplifies an approach to diagnosing and treating mold toxins, you can email me for the “Mycotoxin Article” at [FatigueDoc@gmail.com](mailto:FatigueDoc@gmail.com). ♦



Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, is one of the most frequently quoted integrative medical authorities in the world. He is the author of 10 books, including the best-selling *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*, *The Complete Guide to Beating Sugar Addiction*, *Diabetes Is Optional* and the popular free Smart Phone app *Cures A-Z*. Dr. Teitelbaum appears often as a guest on news and talk shows nationwide including Good Morning America, The Dr. Oz Show, Oprah & Friends, CNN, and FoxNewsHealth. Learn more at [Vitality101.com](http://Vitality101.com).