

Low-Salicylate diet



What are salicylates?

Salicylates are the salts of salicylic acid, which is a chemical that is taken as medicine to relieve mild to moderate pain, inflammation and fever. Salicylates can also be used as blood thinners to prevent heart attacks and strokes, and to manage rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout and rheumatic fever. Salicylates work by blocking the body from making and releasing chemicals responsible for pain and swelling. It can reduce fever by working on the brain's thermostat. Salicylates are in aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), many prescription drugs, and can be in many foods.

Why should I avoid them?

If you are sensitive to salicylates, then they can make you ill, causing symptoms like allergies, though if tested, you may not have any specific immunoglobulin markers for them. They can make you anything from mildly unwell right through to experiencing anaphylactic shock, though this is quite rare. Sensitivity to salicylates tends to be found more often in people with asthma, and increases with age.



What are the symptoms I might experience if I'm allergic to salicylates?

- skin problems - itching, rash, hives, mouth ulcers, raw hot red rash around mouth,
- swelling of the hands and feet
- breathing difficulties - asthma, persistent cough
- brain symptoms - hyperactivity, lack of concentration or memory
- stomach upsets or aches
- urgency to urinate or bedwetting in children

What should I do?

You will need to undertake a low-salicylate diet, which restricts a number of common foods that contain salicylates. Salicylates are chemicals that occur naturally in many fruits and vegetables. They act as natural preservatives to delay rotting. The salicylate level in food can vary, with raw foods, dried foods and juices containing higher levels than the same cooked food. While you are on this diet, ideally you will keep a food diary, and record what you eat, and if there is any reaction. After you have been off particular foods for a few weeks, you can slowly introduce them and see if you react again. If not, you will know that you can include that food, at least in small amounts or as part of a varied diet. If you react, then it is best to avoid that food in future.



You will also need to note that salicylates can occur in many artificial additives, particularly yellow and red food colourings (tartrazine, sunset yellow, amaranth), preservatives (benzoates, sulphites and gallates), and you'll need to buy an additive code book to make sure that you know the codes for these additives so you can avoid them when shopping.

You will also need to check your supplements, and toiletries for salicylate substances. Spices, for example, dill and mint are very high in salicylates.

Can I eat out?

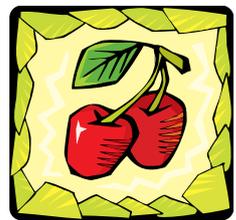
This can be more difficult than a lot of other diets for eating out, but it is possible. You will have to contact any restaurant before booking and see if the chef is amenable to cooking for this particular diet. You could mention a number of relatively easy dishes and see if they will oblige.

Are there any resources on this problem?

There are not as many books on low salicylate diets as there are for other nutritional problems. But one classic book is still available and can be ordered through Amazon or local bookshops, or searched for in your local library.

Ben Feingold *The Feingold Cookbook for Hyperactive Children: And Others with Problems Associated with Food Additives and Salicylates*. Random House, 1979

And a useful website is: <http://www.foodcanmakeyouill.co.uk/salicylate/index.html> which gives lots of information about the problem.



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The diet:

As some people have to avoid salicylates altogether, while others can eat small amounts of certain foods which contain varying low levels of salicylates, I have grouped the foods by amount, rather than categorising them as foods to eat and foods to avoid. As cooking or drying foods can alter the salicylate content, I have indicated whether the food was measured raw, canned or dried. You also need to take into account the amounts of these foods you might eat, as eating a very small amount of food with a bit higher level may be less problematic than eating a lot of a food with a low level of salicylates.

Foods with no salicylates:

meat, fish, fresh bananas and pears, canned bamboo shoots, fresh cabbage, celery, lettuce, turnip, dried peas, peeled potato, grains (except corn), dry poppyseeds, most dairy products, malt vinegar, gin, vodka and whisky

Foods with low salicylates: below 0.5mg/100g

Fruits: raw apples, apricot nectar, raw custard apple, raw or canned figs, raw kiwifruit, raw lemon, raw loquat, canned lychees, raw mango, fresh orange juice, raw passionfruit, raw pawpaw, peach nectar, canned or raw pears, pineapple juice, raw plums, watermelon

Veg: raw or canned asparagus, raw beans and beansprouts, canned beetroot, raw broad beans, raw brussels sprouts, raw carrots, raw chives, raw choko, raw peeled eggplant, raw garlic, raw leek, raw marrow, fresh mushrooms, raw onions, raw parsnip, raw peas, unpeeled potato, pumpkin, raw shallots, frozen spinach, raw corn, raw tomato and tomato juice, raw watercress

Nuts & seeds: brazil, cashew, desiccated coconut, hazelnut, peanut butter, pecan, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts

Drinks: beer, cider, some wines, chamomile tea, decaf, Milo, Ovaltine

Foods with levels above 0.5mg/100g but below 1.5mg/100g. (This may be too high for many people.)

Fruits: canned apple, canned apricots, raw avocado, raw cherries, dried figs, grape juice, fresh grapefruit, raw mandarins, raw mulberries, raw nectarines, canned peaches, canned pineapple, canned plums, raw strawberries

Veg: alfalfa, raw broccoli, raw capsicum, chillis, raw peeled cucumber, raw eggplant, canned mushrooms, canned okra, canned olives, raw radishes, raw spinach, raw baby squash, sweet potato, raw zucchini

Nuts & seeds: fresh macadamias, unshelled peanuts, pine nuts, pistachios

Drinks: sherry, brandy, rum, some wines

Foods that are high in salicylates (over 1.5mg/100g) and must be avoided:

Fruits: raw apricots, canned blackberries, frozen blackcurrants, canned blueberries or boysenberries, canned cherries, canned cranberries, all dates, canned guava, dried grapes of any size, canned loganberries, raw oranges, raw pineapple, prunes, all raspberries and redcurrants, rockmelon

Veg: raw endive, gherkins

Herbs & spices: (all very high levels) cumin, curry, dill, five spice, garam masala, ginger, mixed herbs, oregano, paprika, pepper, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme, turmeric and herbs in general

Other items: tea, honey, licorice, peppermints, Benedictine, water chestnuts, almonds, worcestershire sauce, Vegemite and similar spreads, blue cheeses, vinegars, pies and cakes made with dried fruit or any ingredients from the high salicylate section.

Also avoid all food that is artificially coloured or preserved and check medications, toothpastes and chewing gums.

