

Reader reports from the Food Intolerance Network

www.fedup.com.au

("fish oil" keyword only)

[1372] Major Depression, anxiety, muscle pain and other symptoms overcome with the help of a recommended dietitian (December 2015)

I first did the RPAH Elimination Diet (strict dairy and gluten free) in 1997 after experiencing chronic hives. I had the help of a dietitian and had seen an immunologist. The diet showed I was sensitive to salicylates and amines. For many years I successfully managed my hives by taking a daily antihistamine and also by reducing my intake of very high chemical foods, although I wasn't very strict at all with managing the food side of things.

Over the last 5 years, I rarely had hives anymore, and thought maybe I had outgrown my intolerance. So I gradually increased my food chemicals again. Then in 2012, I experienced a Major Depression for 8 months. I was feeling so low, so hopeless, and crying all the time, it was the darkest time in my life. I work as a Graphic Designer, and I found my creativity totally vanished when I was depressed. This was very frightening, being creative always came so naturally to me, and losing this ability had a big impact on my livelihood too.

I was perplexed as to why I would be depressed, my life was wonderful, I couldn't see a reason for the melancholy that had overtaken me. I remember telling my GP that it felt more like a 'chemical thing', like something was out of balance with my internal chemistry. In hindsight, I should have trusted my instinct on this... instead, I took my GP's advice and I tried therapy, exercise and rest, and then antidepressants (SSRIs). Nothing worked and the antidepressants gave me nasty side effects (nausea, migraine with aura, hot flushes, diarrhoea, nightmares, anxiety, muscle twitches, split tongue, light sensitivity, foggy brain, blocked ears), and then some nasty withdrawals (brain zaps, teary, lack of appetite, insomnia). During the depression, I was also suffering badly with muscle pain. I was seeing a physio very regularly, and taking maximum doses of Panadol every day, but still had chronic pain.

At the time, I was taking fish oil supplements because I believed it may be beneficial in treating depression. I was also taking probiotics, believing it would boost my immune system – I never felt well! I stopped taking probiotics after I saw no measurable benefit, and when I stopped taking them, I noticed my muscle pain actually improved a bit. Then the penny started to drop... maybe my food intolerance symptoms had switched from hives to depression and muscle pain! I realised that the fish oil supplement I was taking was very high in amines, so I stopped taking it, and noticed a further improvement with my muscle pain and eventually my mood. Then I started searching online to see if depression and muscle pain were known symptoms of food intolerance. Back in 1997 I don't recall being informed that these could be symptoms, but sure enough I found myself reading about other people's experiences on FedUp! Thanks to you for all the work you have done and continue to do, to shed light on this complex and misunderstood issue. Your forum and website, and cookbook really helped me put the pieces of my own health puzzle in place.

So then I also began to reduce my food chemicals, and other chemicals such as perfumes, and cleaning products, and I saw a slow but steady improvement in my depression! I wanted to be sure I was on the right track, so I booked a dietitian to help me through the RPAH Elimination Diet again. I started elimination with a local dietitian, only to quickly realise she didn't have enough experience or knowledge in this area. For example, she advised me to liberalise my diet as I went through the challenges, adding back any foods I didn't respond to. I knew that this was likely to confuse my results, and immediately lost confidence in that particular dietitian. I voiced my frustration about this on your forum and thankfully another member recommended a marvellous failsafe dietitian to me. I was so happy to find that she was able to help me straight away. It was such a relief to have her insight and also her support through the rest of the process. She really took the time to consider my case, treating me as an individual, and showing great compassion towards any struggles I had. With anxiety and depression being triggered during my challenges, she was wonderful at encouraging me to stick with it until the end.

The results of my elimination this time were much clearer and more accurate than last time, and this was mostly due to her attention to detail, and ongoing support. She was very generous with her email support and this made all the difference during the tricky challenges. I am now finished my challenges, and have discovered that salicylates trigger ringing ears, acne, restless sleep, mouth ulcers, and anxiety. Amines cause depression and muscle pain. Food has always been a real source of joy for me, and although it is tough to accept that I have to restrict certain foods, it is immensely empowering to be able to manage my health this way. My lovely dietitian is now helping me to liberalise my diet, and has been brilliant with offering me a few different approaches for how to manage this stage too - Rachel by email

[1237] An Interview with an MS failsafer (October 2013)

How long have you had MS?

I was diagnosed with MS 13 years ago. In retrospect, I think food intolerances have been with me since childhood: I endured terrible growing pains and had my adenoids taken out at 8 years of age because I supposedly talked through my nose. After years of bowel pains and then my MS diagnosis at 15, I finally decided to eliminate dairy foods four years later and noticed a dramatic improvement in my health.

How does MS affect you?

The MS symptoms I experience day to day are mostly sensory symptoms plus fatigue. The sensory changes mostly relate to feelings of cold particularly in my legs (not cold to touch but I perceive them to feel like ice blocks). This sensation changes from being really noticeable (both my legs feel cold 8 on a scale of 1-10) to not much at all (limited to the smallest spot on one leg but hardly noticeable - 2 out of 10). Early last year I went 100% failsafe after a period of not being so strict and after 4 weeks my cold sensations had reduced dramatically to about 1- 2 out of 10.

I have discussed my experiences with my allergist and he said other people with MS he has treated have had positive changes in their symptoms when following the RPAH elimination diet. I certainly notice a difference in sensation and fatigue when being failsafe. It has taken me years to finally

accept this because I, like so many, kept thinking how can a meat and potatoes type diet be good for me? (Comment from Sue: it is possible to do a failsafe very low fat vegan diet)

Have you ever tried the standard MS diet?

All research into MS says to eat heaps of fruit and vegies, follow a low saturated fat diet and supplement with fish oils. After years of eating a mostly vegetarian diet, popping heaps of evening primrose oil and fish oil, I can now say that being failsafe is helping me the most. In fact, I follow failsafe eating principles but make sure my diet is low in saturated fat.

Do you have any opinions on Professor Jelinek's recommendations about sunshine?

I have read Professor Jelinek's book and think there is definitely something in the research about sun, vitamin D and calming an overactive immune system. It is quite interesting that over the last 13 years since my MS diagnosis every relapse I have had occurred in winter or very soon after! I certainly feel more energised in summer and even a few rays streaming through our lounge window see me on the floor soaking up the sunshine in winter.

Any hints for others?

I have noticed that taking bicarb soda in water makes quite a difference to food intolerance symptoms, particularly with facial flushing and itchy skin which is one of my more obvious reactions to salicylates, amines and MSG. How or why failsafe works is a mystery to me but I am happy to benefit from the impact it is making on my day to day health

[1081] Our toddler was a little tornado on salicylates (December 2011)

My husband was one of the first children to go on the Feingold diet in Australia in 1973. His parents still talk about the amazing improvements they saw although on that diet he was allowed pineapple, dates, cauliflower and mushrooms. I think some of the improvement was that they had a local butcher, they made their own bread, and they never ate out because there was no eating out then. They had a wonderful local chemist who made them toothpaste.

Because of that you would have thought we would twig much earlier to our son but we didn't. We avoided tomato and orange a lot because from when he first went on solids he broke out in a rash and did again a few times so we just didn't eat them. But he got worse over time. At 15 months he would run up our very steep street and then do 4 blocks of the neighbourhood, with us trying to keep up. I'm now pretty sure that was the kick he was getting from the salicylates. His absolute favourite was apricot teddies. We used to only let him have 1 or 2 every fortnight but that, along with all the other high foods kept him like a little tornado.

My husband's mum told us about salicylates when we went away on a holiday. His eczema got really bad and we thought it must be from the chlorine when we went swimming. She suggested fish oil tablets so we got some for kids but they also had high salicylates. He just went hyper in no time. He kept asking for more of them and that night he screamed and screamed all night and kept scratching worse than he ever had. He had welts all over him in the morning.

We tried cutting out just salicylates and saw some improvement but it just got bad again. Then I went hunting on the internet, found your book and we talked with our doctor about doing the RPA

elimination diet. The change was noticeable, the biggest being less extreme mood swings and going to sleep at night. Bedtime used to be a 2 hour stint every night and then he would collapse in exhaustion.

We have seen head banging on two occasions, well after we started the diet. My sister gave him some yoghurt by mistake with Annatto 160b in it and he was a very loud very angry little boy. He didn't really have tantrums as such but did quite a bit of banging his head, wouldn't let us near him. He didn't want to be touched at all and kept threatening his little brother with all kinds of nasty things. A lot of yelling. He did not sleep at all well that night needless to say. It was the same the second time. – Susan, by email

[956] Feedback after two years on failsafe (August 2010)

Our family have been following the Fed Up books for over 2 years now for a 5 year old daughter who was reacting severely with rashes on her face & body & a son whose doctor wanted to prescribe ADHD medication.

I can happily report that our daughter is rash-free and in fact after 7 years she doesn't even have eczema anymore. I believe her immune system has improved dramatically since being mostly failsafe. She is a healthy beautiful clear-skinned little girl with a good resistance to illnesses these days. My son is also progressing well with a mostly failsafe diet and fish oils to help with concentration. (our biggest problems - artificial colours & preservatives & in my daughter case - corn as well).

Just as an aside to this story - I put up with dreadful headaches every day for about 15 years, along with the headaches I got muscle cramps in my neck & shoulders. I was on a muscle relaxant for years until visiting a chiropractor. I went off the medication but after some weeks had a return of the problem after eating bacon & ham.....I am now convinced it was nitrates that were giving me the problem, and I have proven it a couple of times since. I have read about headaches & nitrates but can't find anything on it affecting the muscles - for years I thought I was just being uptight!! - Julie by email

[678] 'Postnatal depression' due to fish oil capsules (September 2008)

I've recently noticed that I get really grumpy when taking a certain brand of super strength fish oil capsules. I started thinking I was suffering from post natal depression as I could feel the anger start inside me and build really fast and grow bigger. A bit hard to describe but I had never had this feeling before. I forgot to take them for a while which is what made me realise it was the capsules. - Carole, by email

(see our [Supplements factsheet](#) for similar reports)

[636] Insomniac due to fish oils (March 2008)

My daughter was taking fish oil capsules prescribed by our homeopath (and yes, I have taken notice of your comments in the Checklist of Common Mistakes about homeopathics possibly causing more problems, just what I didn't need to hear) and within days she became an insomniac! It took us

several weeks to come up with the connection and as soon as we stopped them, sleep returned to normal.

[676] Salicylate reaction to NSAIDs and Cox 2 inhibitors (September 2008)

I just wanted to let you know that some people with salicylate sensitivity do not just react to NSAIDs. Cox2 inhibitors such as Celebrex can also be a concern in 5-10 per cent of people. I fall into this group and I am unable to take any prescription anti-inflammatories apart from prednisolone. Fish oil (if tolerated in high doses) is an excellent alternative for me and thought your readers may benefit from this. It was known that I had reactions to NSAIDs and aspirin yet when I was trialled on Cox 2 no mention was made that there could be a possible cross reaction

(<http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/about-allergy/65-aer/general/105-allergic-reactions-to-aspirin-and-other-pain-killers>). I was basically told that I was unusual without any explanation other than for me to try others would be life threatening. If it helps one other person to know that this is possible then what I went through is worth it. – by email, Vic

([More about fish oil supplements](#) - the writer of this email does not react to amines and is using Blackmores fish oil)

[440] "my son had an horrific reaction to fish oil" (August 2006)

I complained to the Adverse Medications Events hotline (thru your website) about the fact that the label on a particular brand of fish oil supplements says free of salicylates and amines and they were most sympathetic and helpful. They asked the Queensland Nutrition Council to investigate and discovered that not only does the lemon and lime flavouring contain salicylates and amines, but so does the tuna, and how high depends on whether the tuna is fresh or canned. As I told you, my son had an horrific adverse reaction to it, and was waking up through the night on it - in fact, he asked me if he could stop taking it. I tried lowering the dose to a teaspoon in the morning only (two teaspoons recommended morning and night), and it made no difference, so I stopped it. The AME spokesperson told me she had written to the company involved asking them to justify their claim. She also told me the product has been withdrawn in the United States, but she didn't know why. I'm still investigating, but it would appear from my research that the US Federal Trade Commission ruled that the company made unjustifiable claims that it helped kids with ADD. Later the company was ordered not to make these claims without scientific evidence. (Complaints after January 2006 to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care mail@safetyandquality.gov.au).- father of a six year old

[635] Fish oil recommendation from Jen (March 2008)

I have done an extensive amount of research about the various fish oils available and found Xtend-Life from New Zealand to be very forthcoming with information about their product when emailed queries. We have tried it with the three children and myself (all amine, salicylate, lactose, and everything artificial responders) and found it to be fine (although I can't say I noticed any benefits, I certainly didn't notice any deterioration either). It is only available directly from them, not through stores. The website is as follows: http://health.xtend-life.com/product/Omega_3~DHA_Esters.aspx. (we welcome feedback)

[454] 'Wanted to warn others' about fish oil capsules (August 2006)

Previous to the diet, on the recommendation of our pediatrician we tried fish oil capsules for 4 weeks with good results for concentration. We stopped using the fish oil supplement when we started the diet as we wanted a clear reading of what it would do. (We were very much non believers at this stage). The difference on the diet was amazing and we did the diet very successfully for over three months. We were into our second challenge when I reintroduced the fish oil thinking nothing of it as it was recommended along with diet by the pediatrician. We never got back to where we started even after four weeks of strict diet. We came off it thinking it was possibly a one off and his body had adjusted to the diet. We have paid heavily for it, forgetting what life was like before the diet. My son is unhappy and we even began Ritalin trials feeling that we had exhausted all avenues. Then a friend who is also a failsafer was told by a doctor at the RPA Allergy Clinic that there is a problem with fish oil and I just wanted to warn others who may fall into the same trap. We have begun the diet again today and my son is happy to go back on it even though he knows it means no McDonald parties and fruit and pizza which are his favourites. Thank you for giving us another option, and this fabulous website which makes the daunting task much easier.

[439] "Migraines due to amines including fish oil" (August 2006)

My daughter has had migraines since she was about three years old. We had no idea what they were for several years. She usually gets a fever with her migraines and because of the fever the doctor would always put it down to 'a virus', prescribing painkillers. I would often give her panadol for four days straight just to keep the headaches at bay. She goes limp and listless, her eyes droop, she lies there and sleeps for hours until the panadol wears off and then the pain and fever return. Most times she will scream and cry at me grabbing her forehead, pleading with me to take the pain away. "Mummy Mummy my heads hurts, please stop it."

A year after she started getting the migraines, we were referred to a paediatrician who could find no medical reason for them. He thought it may have been an attention grabber or perhaps the start of a cold. He was at a loss too. He asked me to diarise her migraines. The migraines continued on and off with no regular pattern that I could work out. Once a week, then maybe another in 6 weeks times, then two months. It varied greatly.

Two years later we started taking a fish oil supplement (not the same brand as the one mentioned in [440], [441]). The migraines became more frequent and she started throwing up with them. She would go to sleep with a migraine, wake at 3 am and throw up in bed. This time her paediatrician ordered a CAT scan which was clear. He offered my 6 year old a daily dose of Betablockers or a trial using Riboflavins. He also suggested diet manipulation ... Guess which one we chose? ...

On the second day of the amine challenge, my daughter got a migraine, fever, droopy eyes and became listless. School rang and asked me to collect her, again. She stayed unwell for several days with the headache. Since the end of the amine challenge three months ago we haven't had one migraine! So, no more amines for my daughter. It turns out that the fish oil supplement has amines in it which is why her migraines would have become so frequent and regular. I was giving her six capsules per day for three months as per instructions. - mother of a seven year-old

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