Food intolerances and allergies

Food allergy is when the immunity system generates an adverse reaction to specific proteins found in food. Symptoms can range from tingling in the mouth to a skin rash, swelling of the throat that makes it difficult to breathe-glottis edema- and a life-threatening allergic reaction known as anaphylactic shock. Many foods can potentially cause an allergic reaction, but there are particularly eight types of foods that are responsibile for the majority of all food allergies: gluten, eggs, fish, crustaceans, peanuts, soybean, milk and nuts. Food intolerance is an adverse reaction to a sort of food or ingredient every time a person eats it, particularly in large quantities. It isn't the same as a food allergy because the immunites system isn't involved. There is a food intolerance when the body cannot bear a certain type of foodstuff, because it doesn't produce enough of the specific enzyme it needs to digest that food. The most common intolerance is cow's milk (people cannot digest the sugar lactose) and gluten (often it leads to coeliac disease, severe inflammation of the digestive tract). Other intolerances can be to chimica preservatives or additives in food and drinks, like sulphites, monosodium, glutamate, caffeine or aspartame. Food intolerance isn't usually harmful but can cause unpleasant symptoms: nausea, bloating, addominal pain and diarrhea, they can begin hours or days after eating or drinking the food. In the end the differences between food allergies and food intolerances are that allergies produce specific symptoms which usually develop within minutes of eating the food, while an intolerance produces more general symptoms, such as indigestion and bloating, that can develop several hours after eating. Another difference is that only a tiny particle of food is needed to trigger off a food allergy, whereas is needed a larger amount of food to trigger off intolerance. Furthermore the symptoms of a food allergy can be life threatening whereas the symptoms of a food intolerance are never immediately life threatening. The allergenes of many foods such as yeast, cereals, cat's hair, dust mite also cause cross-allergy. The cross-reaction is a reaction of the immune system caused by a combination of two or more allergies. The cause of this reaction is the structural similarity between two allergens. When an allergic subject comes into contact with similar allergens, its immune system reacts activating the immune response as a consequence. For example, there are several structural similarities between pollen allergens and allergic proteins of various foods; therefore, in most cases, allergic subjects to pollen will be sensitized also in fruit or vegetables. There are different types of cross-reactions, the most numerous involving different allergens inhalant and food allergens:

- Grasses with tomato, melon, watermelon, kiwi, almond

- Betullacee with apple, hazelnut, peach, cherry, - Mites with shellfish, mollusks
- Compositae with celery, parsley, carrot, chamomile, fennel;
- Parietaria with basil, nettle, mulberry, peas, melon cherry
- Latex with banana, chestnut, avocado, kiwi, mango.