

Do-it-yourself Allergy Testing

Years ago, Dr. Arthur Coca popularized the "pulse test" for food allergy. He found that some (but definitely not all) allergic individuals have a significant increase in their resting pulse after eating a particular food allergen. Others have observed that eating certain trigger foods causes them to retain fluids, which manifests as a significant weight gain that doesn't disappear by the next morning (like most water-weight gain).

These are observations you can make on your own, right at home. To get started, get yourself a notebook that you can use to record each day's measurements, and make sure you have an accurate bathroom scale. Weigh yourself each morning and evening for several days (a week if possible) and record those numbers in the notebook. During that same week, take your resting pulse just before - -and again one hour after -- your largest meal of the day (and if possible before and one hour after other meals too).

At the end of the week, take a look at your measurements: A person's pulse might increase as much as eight to 20 beats or more per minute after certain meals. It's also not unusual to see 2 to 6 pound (or more) weight gain in one day. And the added "weight" can persist for two or more days.

If you notice that either situation occurred in your observations, it means that you do indeed have some form of food allergy. Once you've determined that you do have food allergies, you should go ahead and make an appointment to have complete clinical testing done to determine what specific foods are causing problems for you.

Two cautions: While either a "positive" pulse or water weight test (or both) almost always signals food allergies, "negative" tests do not necessarily mean that you don't have them. Any body system can react to food allergy: Some allergies may affect your pulse or weight, while other allergies don't affect pulse or weight at all. Also, if you just happen not to eat any of the things to which you're allergic, your self-observation will be "negative." So, if you have persistent health issues that don't seem to get better no matter what you do, you should still consider having thorough screening done even if you get a negative result on your self-test.