

Low Histamine Diet

Lower the histamine bucket when your body can't clear it fast enough.



MAINLY USED FOR

Histamine intolerance, MCAS

CORE RESTRICTION

Aged, fermented and leftover foods; histamine liberators

EFFORT

4 of 5

01 How it works

Histamine is present in food, released by your own mast cells, and cleared mainly by the enzyme diamine oxidase (DAO) in the gut lining. When intake plus release exceeds clearance, you get a scattered picture — flushing, headache, hives, nasal congestion, palpitations, loose stools — that follows no single food reliably.

That is the 'bucket' model, and it explains why the same glass of red wine is fine on Tuesday and awful on Friday. It is a threshold problem, not a true allergy.

Histamine accumulates with time and microbial action. Fresh fish is low; the same fish after two days in the fridge is high. Cooking does not destroy it.

02 Nutrition at a glance

Histamine tolerance is a bucket, not a threshold — total load and food freshness matter more than any single item.

Trial length	2-4 weeks	Enough to see a pattern, short enough to be safe
Leftovers	Eat within 24 h or freeze	Histamine builds in the fridge
Fish	Fresh or frozen-at-sea only	The single biggest dietary source
Fermented foods	Removed in the trial	Cheese, wine, vinegar, cured meat, soy sauce
Reintroduction	One food every 2-3 days	Symptoms can lag by hours

Nutrients that often run short: Vitamin C · Fibre · Calcium · Plant variety · Protein if fish and cheese are both out.

A word on electrolytes

Any change in how you eat changes how much sodium, potassium and magnesium you take in — usually downwards, because cooking from scratch removes the packaged foods that supplied most of it. Headaches, cramps, lightheadedness on standing and that flat, foggy feeling in the first fortnight are far more often an electrolyte dip than the diet failing. Drink to thirst rather than to a rule, salt your food unless you have been told not to, and lean on potassium- and magnesium-rich whole foods. If you have kidney disease, heart failure or high blood pressure, or you take a diuretic, ACE inhibitor or ARB, set your targets with your clinician — and avoid potassium-based salt substitutes unless told they are safe for you.

03 Key cautions

The things that most often catch people out — worth raising at your next appointment.

TALK TO A CLINICIAN

Rule out true allergy and mast cell disease first

Histamine intolerance is a diagnosis of exclusion. Anaphylaxis, IgE allergy and MCAS need medical assessment, not a food list.

WORTH TESTING

Some medications block DAO

Certain NSAIDs, antibiotics and antidepressants reduce diamine oxidase activity. Review your list with a pharmacist before assuming food is the whole story.

KEEP AN EYE ON

Published food lists disagree wildly

Histamine content is not routinely measured and varies with storage. Trust your own diary over any chart you find online.

KEEP AN EYE ON

Long-term restriction is nutritionally poor

Staying on the trial list for a year rarely helps and narrows nutrition sharply. Reintroduce to the widest diet you tolerate.

04 Conditions it is used for

- Histamine intolerance / DAO deficiency
- Mast cell activation syndrome, as an adjunct to medical therapy
- Chronic spontaneous urticaria
- Some migraine, especially wine- and cheese-triggered
- Symptomatic overlap with SIBO and post-viral syndromes

05 Your food lists

Eat freely

Fresh protein

- Meat and poultry cooked the day it is bought or from frozen
- Fish frozen at sea and cooked from frozen
- Egg yolk

Vegetables

- Zucchini
- Carrot
- Broccoli
- Cucumber
- Lettuce
- Sweet potato
- Onion
- Asparagus
- Cabbage

Fruit

- Apple
- Pear
- Blueberry
- Mango
- Peach
- Melon

Staples

- Rice
- Oats
- Quinoa
- Olive oil
- Fresh mozzarella and ricotta
- Herbs

Eat with care

Individually variable

- Egg white — a histamine liberator for some
- Citrus, banana, papaya, pineapple — liberators rather than high-histamine
- Chocolate and cocoa
- Yeast-leavened bread
- Legumes
- Coffee, which blocks DAO in some people

Best to skip

Aged and fermented

- Aged cheese
- Salami, prosciutto and cured meat
- Sauerkraut and kimchi
- Soy sauce, miso, vinegar
- Kombucha
- Yoghurt and kefir

High-histamine fish

- Tuna
- Mackerel
- Sardines
- Anchovies
- Any fish not frozen promptly
- Tinned fish

Other

- Red wine, beer, champagne
- Tomato
- Spinach
- Eggplant
- Avocado
- Dried fruit
- Leftovers older than 24 hours

06 Three days of meals

Day 1

Breakfast: Oats cooked with fresh milk, sliced apple, cinnamon.

Lunch: Chicken breast cooked from fresh, quinoa, roasted carrot and zucchini.

Dinner: Cod cooked from frozen with olive oil, rice, broccoli.

Snack: Blueberries and a fresh mozzarella ball.

Day 2

Breakfast: Rice porridge with pear and maple syrup.

Lunch: Fresh turkey mince stir fry with cabbage and carrot over rice.

Dinner: Lamb chops, sweet potato mash, asparagus.

Snack: Sliced mango.

Day 3

Breakfast: Ricotta with peach and a drizzle of honey.

Lunch: Chicken and cucumber salad, olive oil and salt, no vinegar.

Dinner: Pork loin, boiled potato, green beans.

Snack: Rice cakes with fresh butter.

07 Getting started

- Freeze in portions and cook from frozen. Storage handling changes histamine load more than food choice does.
- Run a strict two-to-four week reduction, not longer, then reintroduce systematically.
- Keep a symptom-and-timing diary; histamine reactions often lag 30 minutes to several hours.
- Discuss antihistamines, cromolyn or DAO supplements with your clinician — diet alone rarely covers the whole load.
- Rule out mimics: mastocytosis, carcinoid, thyroid disease and SIBO all present similarly.

08 Common mistakes

- Treating published histamine food lists as precise. They disagree wildly and are mostly not based on measured values.
- Eating 'safe' foods four days out of the fridge.
- Staying restricted for a year. Long-term low histamine eating is nutritionally poor and rarely necessary.
- Missing non-food triggers — heat, exercise, stress, alcohol, NSAIDs, some contrast agents.
- Ignoring gut health, when overgrowth and inflammation reduce DAO activity directly.

09 Questions people ask

Can I test for histamine intolerance?

Serum DAO and histamine levels are unreliable. The practical test is a supervised elimination followed by reintroduction. Your clinician may test tryptase to look for mast cell disease.

Does cooking destroy histamine?

No. Histamine is heat stable. Freshness and cold-chain handling are what matter.

Is it permanent?

Usually not. Many people tolerate far more once an underlying driver — overgrowth, inflammation, medication — is dealt with.

10 How it overlaps with other diets

- Low histamine plus SIBO is a common pairing; treating overgrowth usually raises histamine tolerance.
- Conflicts with fermented-food-heavy 'gut health' advice — probiotic strains matter, since some produce histamine.
- Combining with low FODMAP shrinks the safe list drastically. Sequence: FODMAP first, histamine second.

This guide is educational and is not medical advice. Therapeutic diets can change how medication works and can leave gaps in nutrition, so please plan any of this with your doctor or a registered dietitian.