

Histamine Intolerance: What It Is & How Your Diet Can Contribute

Julie Matthews, CNC



Rebekah Kelley: Welcome to the Humanized podcast, all about personalizing your health. I am your host, Rebekah Kelley. Today we'll be discussing Histamine Intolerance: What It Is and How Your Diet Can Contribute, with Julie Matthews. Before I introduce Julie, I want to remind everyone to subscribe, to get all our variety of casts in audio, video and transcription at HumanizedHealth.com. I'd also like to thank our lead sponsor, Village Green Apothecary, at MyVillageGreen.com.

Our special guest, Julie Matthews, will discuss histamine and how our diet can play a big role in elevated levels in the body. A little bit about Julie Matthews before we get going. She is a certified nutrition consultant and published researcher specializing in complex neurological, digestive and immune conditions, most notably autism. She is the author of the award-winning book, *Nourishing Hope for Autism*, and co-author of a study, "Providing the Efficacy of Nutrition and Dietary Intervention for Autism," published in the peer review journal, *Nutrients*. Julie's approach is based on the personalized nutrition needs of each person and stems from her 20 years of clinical nutrition experience and research. Her methodology of BioIndividual Nutrition helps individuals and practitioners who work with a wide range of disorders for adults and children improve health and healing.

Julie, thanks for being here with us.

Julie Matthews: Thank you.

Rebekah Kelley: So Julie, let's just jump right in. What is histamine and tell me, how does it affect our bodies?

Julie Matthews: So histamine is a molecule that we find in the mast cells. If we think of allergies and all of the inflammation, it depends where it's located, but that sort of inflammatory response that happens when we come in contact with something we don't tolerate or are allergic to, we get this inflammatory response. And histamine, basically, is one of the substances in these mast cells that gets released and can cause all different kinds of symptoms throughout the body. It's not just when we think of allergies, runny nose and things like that. It can create all different symptoms in different parts of the body including, we have them in the stomach and for some people that might create GERD type symptoms, other people might get inflammation, some people might get hives. So it can be different symptoms for different people, but it's basically something that, when we come into contact with something that the immune system is not happy with, it will release this chemical compound, basically.

Rebekah Kelley: So what foods are high in histamine? Can you give me some examples of some that people have?

Julie Matthews: Yes. So histamine is found in often things that are broken down or fermented, things like bone broths, sauerkraut, canned fish, cured meats, salami, anything like beer, wine, anything with yeast, you know, anything like that. So foods like that are some of the ones that are going to be the highest in histamines.

Rebekah Kelley: Wow. So what is histamine intolerance, then? What does that look like?

Julie Matthews: So what's interesting about histamine intolerance... We normally think of when we don't react well to a food that we have a sensitivity to it, like allergic to eggs or sensitive to gluten or something. But with histamine, what's interesting, it's more of an intolerance, which means that we can only handle so much of it before it overloads our capacity to process it, and then we have a reaction to it. So histamine intolerance is basically an inability to handle the load of histamine that our body has.

Rebekah Kelley: So that can be tricky then. So if you have one egg and you're fine, but you have three eggs and suddenly you have an issue, you think it's not an egg, it's something else. But it could be that egg.

Julie Matthews: Absolutely. Depending on, again, what's causing that. So if someone had an allergy and their histamine reaction was from an allergy, then it might not matter how many eggs they had. But absolutely something else, for example – let's take bone broth. Some people might be able to handle a slow-simmer bone broth that's only done for a couple hours on a low temperature because not that much histamine is created, where if they have a 24-hour long-simmer bone broth, they might have an issue, there's more histamine. Or if their body, some people tend to have more kind of high histamine in their body, depending on how their methylation works. So some people tend to already be kind of on the borderline, where they, let's say it's allergy season. So they've got more allergies in their system, and then they're eating foods that are higher histamine. Or even one of the tricky things with histamine is that you can eat histamine liberating foods. So they might not have high histamine, but they can liberate histamine.

So yes, it's kind of this total amount of histamine that might be in our body through a combination of our methylation and genetics, our environment, and what we're eating. So yes, from that perspective, it is a little bit complicated. It's a little bit about how much load can we tolerate.

Rebekah Kelley: So then how does someone know if they have a histamine intolerance since it seems kind of sneaky in a way.

Julie Matthews: It is, kind of. There are some labs and things that people can do, some markers and things, but usually one of the ways for the average person that's out there, that's just kind of wondering as they're listening to this, there's a couple things. So, I would say... I was going to go with the food thing first, but there are maybe some clues. So, do you tend to have some of that higher allergy response? Do you tend to have a little more allergies to begin with? That might be a little clue. Sometimes people, when they scratch their skin, if it makes a big red mark that, inflammation there, sometimes that's some histamine.

But usually what I use, as a nutrition person, what I'm looking at is, how does somebody react to foods? So that's usually where I go. There are all sorts of other ways that doctors can look at histamine levels and histamine reactions, but I'm looking at foods. So when somebody eats, how do they do when they eat some of the foods I mentioned, whether it's, again, bone broth and sauerkraut... A lot of times we've talked about healthy foods that a lot of people eat thinking they're going to be healthier eating them, and they are great foods. I love these foods, but if you're eating a food and for you, you're not as healthy as you feel like you should be eating this "healthy diet," or you feel like maybe you're getting a reaction, but you think, how could I be getting reaction to this "health food" when everybody else says, how great it is? I would really listen to that intuition there because it might be for you, that food isn't particularly helpful.

So, you know, what I suggest is people do two things. One is have an awareness of some of these foods and just pay attention to how do you feel when you eat them.

But you brought up a good point, that there are so many factors and there are so many foods and ways you can get this overload, sometimes reducing the foods and seeing if you feel better, and then adding some of them back and see, do those symptoms come back, is a good way to get a better sense, because you have a little more contrast there in order to make that determination.

Rebekah Kelley: Thanks, Julie. Those are really valuable insights. Julie Matthews can be found at www.NourishingHope.com. Let me remind you subscribe and get access to all Humanized videos, podcasts and transcriptions from all of our thought leaders on personalized health at HumanizedHealth.com.