

HOW TO

Thrive

with Alpha-gal
food allergy



RootSource
Health and Wellness

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www.rootsourcewellness.com



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*Don't merely survive.
You were made
to thrive!*

~unknown

INTRODUCTION

My Journey with Alpha-gal

In 2019, my Nurse Practitioner gave me the shocking news that my reoccurring “stomach bug” over the past three months was really Alpha-gal. I never expected a sudden food allergy diagnoses – and from a tick no less. I flashed back to just three years earlier just months after moving into our new home. Our neighbor warned my husband and I about this infamous tick borne meat allergy and how he contracted it on his property.

After my initial shock, fear started to set in around all food and eating. My symptoms forced me out of work for 3 days as I was very sick. I made an appointment with an allergist soon after and was informed of the new findings. It seemed this tick born food allergy still had a lot of unknowns. I took the food recommendations of the allergist but quickly found that other foods not on the list were triggering symptoms. It became trial and error as to what I could and could not eat.

As I started to become more confident, enjoying longer spans of time being symptom-free, I was able to work with diagnosed clients to navigate this food allergy. I quickly found every person varied with onset of symptoms, types of symptoms, level of food tolerance, and types of ingredients. This can make things difficult to navigate from onset.

Alpha-gal is becoming more common in North Carolina, particularly where I live in the Piedmont. Around here, if you don't have Alpha-gal, it is very likely you know someone who does. According to the CDC, there has recently been a steep increase in Alpha-gal and may have already affected over 450,000 people. My mission is to bring awareness about this allergy to my community, peers, and especially healthcare practitioners so that we may be able to help identify and navigate Alpha-gal.

“Having the knowledge will give you freedom to eat with peace of mind.”

Changing your eating habits can seem difficult at first but it is a necessity with this diagnosis. Over the past 5 years, I've learned how to navigate this allergy by identifying my triggering foods, ingredients and portions. I've modified my favorite recipes, and feel comfortable eating out again.

I hope this book will be a guide for you on this food allergy journey and help you grow in knowledge and confidence. Ultimately the goal is to lead you to freedom to eat with peace of mind again.



-Tracy Palmatier, RD, LDN

CHAPTER I

What is Alpha Gal?

What is it?

Alpha-gal or known as Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) is an allergy to non-primate mammalian meat and products transmitted by the Lone Star tick. New research is looking at other vectors of transmission including chiggers and other types of ticks. After a bite, the IgE antibody is activated to the oligosaccharide galactose- α -1,3-galactose (Alpha-gal). This allergy is unlike other food allergies where it will typically present itself with delayed symptoms 2–6 hours after eating. Another unique allergy feature is that it is a carbohydrate-directed IgE response, whereas other allergies are a protein-directed IgE response. The response can be very severe even life threatening. There are still a lot of unknowns about this allergy which are currently still being studied.

Will I have this allergy for life?

Although there is no immediate cure for Alpha-gal, medication along with refraining from triggering foods may help you to overcome the allergy. Preventing additional tick bites and avoiding triggering foods will lower your IgE to where you may be able to reintroduce mammalian meats and meat product back into your diet.

What can I do to better manage Alpha-gal reactions?

1. Record which foods are your triggers and their symptoms by keeping a food log (sample included in this book)
2. Recognize what portion sizes causes even the slightest allergic response
3. Cook most of your meals at home
4. Prevent future tick bites

CHAPTER 2

Signs & Symptoms

First Signs

It is important to recognize the signs so that you may be prepared for the possible reaction.

Signs usually start to appear 2–6 hours after eating a food trigger. These signs may vary but most common initial reactions are skin itching, hives, upset stomach, stomach discomfort, and chest tightness.



Symptoms

Anaphylactic shock symptoms are among the most severe symptoms. **Seek immediate medical attention if you have any of these symptoms:** may include but not limited to, swelling in lips, tongue, and throat, chest tightness, itching, itchy skin, rash, wheezing and sneezing, heart burn, shortness of breath, difficult breathing, low blood pressure, dizziness, fainting, headache, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain and diarrhea are also common.

You may encounter some of these or many of these symptoms.



Length of Symptoms

My symptoms included an onset of itchy legs, belly rumblings, gas, then nausea and diarrhea for 3 days. In my experience, nausea has lasted weeks after a reaction. Again, everyone will react differently and have different symptoms and duration time.



CHAPTER 3

Testing for Alpha-Gal



IgE

Your doctor can perform a simple blood test called the IgE. An immunoglobulin E (IgE) test measures the level of IgE, a type of antibody. A diagnosis results in a positive blood test for Alpha-gal specific IgE.

Medications

There are a few medications that can be prescribed by your doctor that can help ease uncomfortable symptoms and some that are essential like the anti nausea medication Zofran. Typically most Alpha-gal clients have been prescribed Epi-pens; whether you had anaphylaxis or not.

Ease GI discomfort

Ginger tea or gelatin-free ginger candy may help ease stomach pain and nausea. Staying hydrated is important with diarrhea symptoms and may be difficult if nausea is present. Consider coconut water with no added sugar or Gatorade Zero to replace lost electrolytes. In my experience, eating any food during symptomatic days seemed to bring on nausea and other GI symptoms again.

CHAPTER 4

What can I eat?

This is not an easy answer because food sensitivities will vary from person to person.

After your diagnosis, there may be anxiety around eating. Take the steps to learn how to prevent a reaction. This will give you more confidence to expand the types of foods you can eat. Eating the same thing can get boring but preventing reactions is more important. Eating familiar non-triggering foods is wise to begin with and gradually expand out to other foods. This will allow you to detect sensitivities and symptoms.

Cooking

My personal experience has led me to thrive with Alpha-gal starting with one of the the essentials: cooking at home. Some may see this as very inconvenient or time consuming, but as a Dietitian, cooking is essential to all general health and wellness. Plus, depending on your sensitivity, you may not have an option. At home, you have control of the ingredients and prevent cross contamination.

Modifying Recipes

You will quickly realize substituting turkey for beef, butter with a plant based butter, bacon for turkey bacon is a shift. But, over time as taste buds change and less reactions occur, you will become more accustomed. How you season your food is key to making your food tasty. Add fresh or dried herbs where you can to really boost the flavor.



Eating Out

Restaurants have become very accommodating to customers due to the rise of food allergies. When I began to eat out, I ate off the Vegan list and as I felt more confident expanded from there. Things to consider when eating out: cross contamination on cooking surfaces, sauces, broths, marinades, deep fryers may not be Alpha-gal friendly and may cause a reaction.

Protein To Eat

Chicken, Turkey, Fish, Shellfish, Duck, Emu, Ostrich, and Eggs are safe to eat. As a general rule, if an animal flies or swims, it will not have Alpha-gal and is therefore safe. Most food labeled "Vegan" is safe to eat – but get into the habit of reading labels.

Food To Avoid

Mammalian meat including: beef, pork, lamb, venison, rabbit, goat, buffalo, kangaroo are not Alpha-gal friendly. I was originally told to avoid any hoofed animal, but that has now changed to any mammal with four legs. This includes 'alternate' names of these meats such as veal, chitlins, pate, certain luncheon meat, ham, bacon, scrapple, etc. (See more detailed list included in the book).

Mammalian meat contains alpha-gal as part of their makeup and these meats should not be eaten. This includes all parts of the animal including organ meats. My allergist expressed, the fattier the meat, the more likely it is to cause an allergic reaction (and more severe). My most severe reaction came about 5 hours after a large portion of full fat ice cream.

Some products made with pan juice, gravies, reductions and sauces can contain mammalian meats. Some must avoid dairy products such as milk, cheese and ice cream. If these foods are tolerated in the diet symptom free, then there is no need to avoid it. An appropriate, individualized approach to consuming these foods can be discussed with your physician or dietitian.

More than just a food allergy

Please take note of medications of porcine origin for example heparin, some pancreatic enzymes, and some natural thyroid medicines are a few that should be avoided. Also before a procedure be sure to let your healthcare team know about your allergy. Some surgical mesh is not Alpha-gal friendly!

Food Log

It is essential to keep a food log when you are first diagnosed to identify your food triggers. Keep a detailed log of what you ate, times you ate, first signs/symptoms, and longevity of symptoms. This will help you navigate your food allergy with more confidence.

Date:

S | M | T | W | T | F | S

Food you ate, portion size

Time you ate

Symptoms

Onset Time

Treatment | Duration of Symptoms

Time

Additional Notes

CHAPTER 6 CHAPTER 4

Hidden Ingredients

This is not a complete list *
You may or may not react to items on this list*

FOOD TO AVOID

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Beef | |
| Beef broth | |
| Imitation beef flavor/broth | |
| Bone broth from cows/bison | |
| Deli meat; ham, roast beef, salami, etc. | |
| Beef jerky | |
| Bison/Buffalo | |
| Goat | |
| Lard | |
| Pie crust | |
| Refried beans (look for vegetarian) | |
| Jiffy corn bread (look for vegetarian) | |
| Lamb/Mutton | |
| Ox | |
| Pork | |
| Bacon | |
| Ham | |
| Sausage | |
| Sausage casings | |
| Rabbit Venison/Deer | |
| Milk butter | |
| Butter oil | |
| Butter | |
| Buttermilk | |
| Curd | |
| Casein | |
| Caseinate | |
| Collagen | |
| Custard | |
| Carrageenan | |
| Evaporated milk | |
| Ghee | |
| | Gelatin |
| | Jello |
| | Marshmallows |
| | Gel cap medications, supplements |
| | Some hard candies, lollipops, gummies |
| | Altoids, Starbursts, candy corn |
| | Platers Dry Roasted Peanuts |
| | Some Hostess cake products |
| | Frosted mini wheat |
| | Rice krispy treats |
| | Frosted pop tarts |



Hidden Ingredients

FOOD TO AVOID

Hydrolyzed milk
Lactic acid
Lactose
Lactalbumin
Lactalbumin phosphate
Lactate solids
Lactyc yeast
Lactitol monohydrate
Lactoglobulin
Milk protein
Milk fat
Milk salt
Milk solids
Milk sugar
Nougat
Powdered milk
Rennet
Rennet casein
Tallow filtered sugar

Whey
Whey protein isolate
Cheese
Cheese flavored snacks
Chocolate chips w/ milkfat
Coffee Creamer
Cottage Cheese
Cream Cheese
Creamy Salad dressing
Goat milk & cheese
Ice Cream
Pudding
Ricotta
Salad Dressing
Sour Cream
Whipped Cream
Yogurt

MILK IS SOMETIMES FOUND IN:

Natural flavoring
Flavoring
Caramel flavoring
High protein flour
Lactic acid (usually not a problem)
Lactic acid starter culture
"Non-dairy" products (may contain casein)



CHAPTER 7

Labels

Be sure to read all labels even if the product looks like it will be Alpha-gal friendly. In the example below, these chicken sausages are advertised as pork free, gluten free, etc. It is not until you read the ingredient list that the last ingredient listed is Lamb Casing- which is not Alpha-Gal friendly. Depending on your sensitivity, you may be able to take the casing off and not have a reaction. Again, everyone will react differently.

SAUSAGES BY
Amylu[®]

.....

Amylu creates each flavor in her own kitchen with hand-blended spices and real ingredients you can see. Her passion is making simple food that tastes amazing. Try our sausages. We think you'll agree that they're the best chicken sausages ever!

Andouille
CHICKEN SAUSAGES

MILD MEDIUM SPICY

PORK-FREE
 NO NITRATES/
 NITRATES*
*Except those naturally occurring in parsley
 CHICKEN RAISED WITH NO ANTIBIOTICS
 GLUTEN-FREE

GF



Nutrition Facts
4 servings per container
Serving Size 1 Link (64g)

Amount per serving
Calories 100

| | % Daily Value* |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Total Fat 4g | 5% |
| Saturated Fat 0.5g | 3% |
| Trans Fat 0g | |
| Cholesterol 55mg | 18% |
| Sodium 520mg | 23% |
| Total Carbohydrate 2g | 1% |
| Dietary Fiber 0g | 0% |
| Total Sugars <1g | |
| Includes 0g Added Sugars | 0% |
| Protein 12g | |
| Vitamin D 0mcg | 0% |
| Calcium 10mg | 0% |
| Iron 1mg | 6% |
| Potassium 158mg | 4% |

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS
Chicken Raised Without Antibiotics, Water, Contains 2% or less of: Spices, Parsley, Crushed Red Pepper, Paprika, Extract of Rosemary, Onions, Garlic, Kosher Salt, Evaporated Cane Sugar, Vinegar, Lamb Casing.

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CHAPTER 8

Cooking



Cooking at Home

It is essential to cook at home, especially soon after your diagnosis to prevent further allergic reactions. Having easy to use cooking tools is a good way to set yourself up for success ie; knives, cutting boards, pans, crock or insta pot, and/or air fryer. This will help take some of the stress out of food prep and batch cooking you can freeze for a later time.

Reading Labels

Reading the ingredient list is essential to preventing an allergic reaction. Never assume it is Alpha-gal friendly by the advertising or front of the package. There are endless ingredients that may not be obvious whether they will cause an allergic reaction. Included in this book is a list of some ingredients to steer away from.

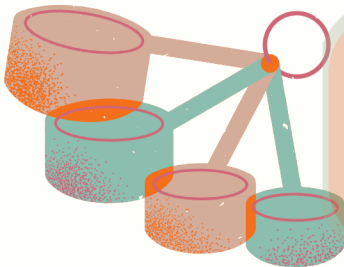
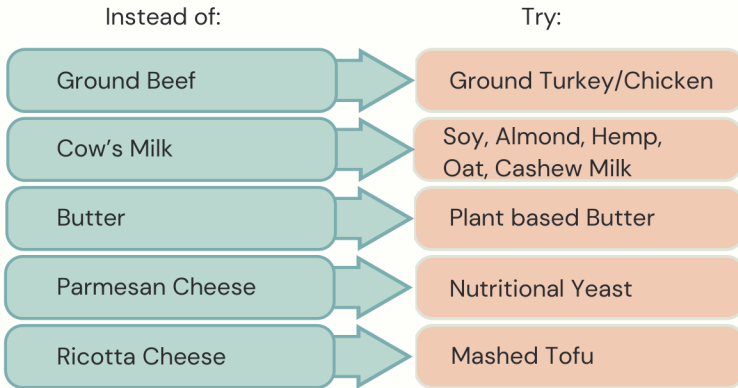
Cross Contamination

Cross contamination may affect highly sensitive people and others may not have a reaction at all. This can include contamination of cutting boards, utensils, and cookware with meat and then using it for non-meat products. I found after my husband cooked beef in our cast our iron skillet and cleaned it, they next time I sauteed plain vegetables in it, I started a reaction. I assume the porous surface kept some of the meat particles and was released into my stir-fry. Cross contamination can also be found in a restaurant deep fryer where all types of foods are fried in the same oil.

CHAPTER 9

Recipes

Making food swaps for your favorite recipe can be the best way to still enjoy those recipes. Luckily, now there are lots of non-dairy options for cheese, cream cheese, yogurt, butter etc.



Also consider the amount of potentially allergy triggering ingredients you are using. You may be able to use some cheese, milk, or butter vs what you used to use.

Pesto

Traditional pesto is made with Parmesan or Ramano cheese. This recipe is dairy free and fat can be substituted by adding nuts. I also add nutritional yeast here for flavor and for extra vitamin B 12.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups fresh basil
- 1 cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 3 tsp of Nutritional Yeast
- 1/3 cup walnuts or shelled sunflower seeds
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp salt

Directions: Blend together. Add more olive oil as needed to make smooth. Keep in refrigerator for about 3 months or freeze in ice cube trays for up to a year. Add to pasta or add mayo for sandwich spread.



Alfredo Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Cashew Milk (Silk brand is thickest)
- 1 cup vegan cheese
- 1/4 cup plant-based butter
- 2 tsp nutritional yeast
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions: Add ingredients to a pot. Bring to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes. Add to pasta or a casserole.



Lasagna

This recipe is a regular in our household. With properly seasoned tofu, you won't even realize this is not ricotta cheese!

INGREDIENTS

Lasagna noodles boiled – not overcooked

1 lb browned and drained ground turkey or chicken

1 cup vegan cheese

2 cups homemade or jarred red tomato sauce

~~For mixture, 1/2 cup firm tofu, 1 egg, 2 tsp nutritional yeast, pinch of salt and 1/4 tsp black pepper. Blend together.~~

Directions: Boil lasagna noodles. In a 9x13" pan spread out about 1/4 cup red sauce, then add about 4-5 noodles to cover pan. Spread a few Tbsp tofu on all noodles in pan, add layers vegan cheese, cooked ground turkey or chicken, about 1/2 cup red sauce. Continue layers until reaches the top of pan. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 deg. for 30 min and 10 min uncovered at 400 deg.



Chocolate Pie

Before you roll your eyes, give this tofu recipe a try! Tofu is made from chick peas and has very little to no flavor. It will take on the flavor of any food you flavor it with – including chocolate!

INGREDIENTS

16oz silken tofu
1/2 cup soy milk
1/2 cup almond butter
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Directions: Melt chocolate chips and add to other blended ingredients. Pour into pie shell (see recipe on following page). Refrigerate for 24 hours. Serve with non-dairy whipped cream and fruit!



Pie Crust

This simple pie crust is easy to make and tastes great.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups almond flour
3 Tbsp plant based butter softened
1 egg
pinch of salt

Directions: Mix ingredients. Spray pie dish well then press dough into dish and bake in oven until golden brown or about 10 min.



Oat Cookies

I can not eat butter so I altered this recipe to be dairy free. I also like to add 1/2 cup plain pea protein powder for extra protein.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Almond Flour
- 1 cup Whole Rolled Oats
- 1 Egg
- 1/3 cup Canola or Olive oil
- 3 Tbsp Maple Syrup
- 1 Cup raisins or dark chocolate chips
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- pinch of salt

Directions: Mix together and scoop 1 tbsp of cookie dough onto olive oil sprayed cookie sheet. Bake at 350 for 12 min. Makes about 20 cookies.



CHAPTER 10

Prevention

Preventing Tick Bites

This may sound easier said than done. The year after my diagnosis, I avoided entering the woods and was still bitten by ticks 3 times that summer. Once walking in my gravel driveway, once in my vegetable garden, and once from my dog sitting beside me. I live in a very rural setting with lots of trees and tall grass surrounding my property, so it may be unavoidable, but I have found a few things that have helped these last few years in preventing tick bites.

Sprays

I very rarely use chemicals on my body or my environment, but using a product with Deet seems to work. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents. I combine Deet on my clothing with a natural essential oil spray directly on my skin (tea tree, Oil of lemon, eucalyptus, Geranium, and mint added to distilled water).

Clothing

Purchase and wear clothing that has been pre-treated with permethrin. Wear a hat to prevent ticks from dropping out of trees.

Body Checks

Check yourself, clothing, and pets after being outside. Followed by bathing or showering as soon as possible after coming indoors. Use a mirror to conduct a full-body tick check to view all parts of your body. Check for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist, and especially in the hair.

Environmental Treatment

TickWarriors is a local NC company sourced with natural ingredients from local manufacturers who use plant-based scents and pesticides that work great. The single most effective way to reduce ticks in your yard is to apply sprays to the yard perimeter, landscaping beds, or along trails and paths in the woods. TickWarriors yard spray and outdoorpest control products use food-grade ingredients to kill ticks on contact and provide a residual that lasts up to 30 days. <https://tickwarriors.com>

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Expert Nutrition Educator Thriving with Alpha-gal food allergy


I am a Registered Dietitian diagnosed with Alpha-gal in 2019. I recognize the challenges each individual faces when diagnosed with this allergy and look forward to helping our community with my expertise and personal experience.



Consult for :

- Specialized Expertise ✓
- What can I eat? ✓
- Recipes ✓
- Eating out w/ Alpha-gal ✓
- Hidden Ingredients ✓

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