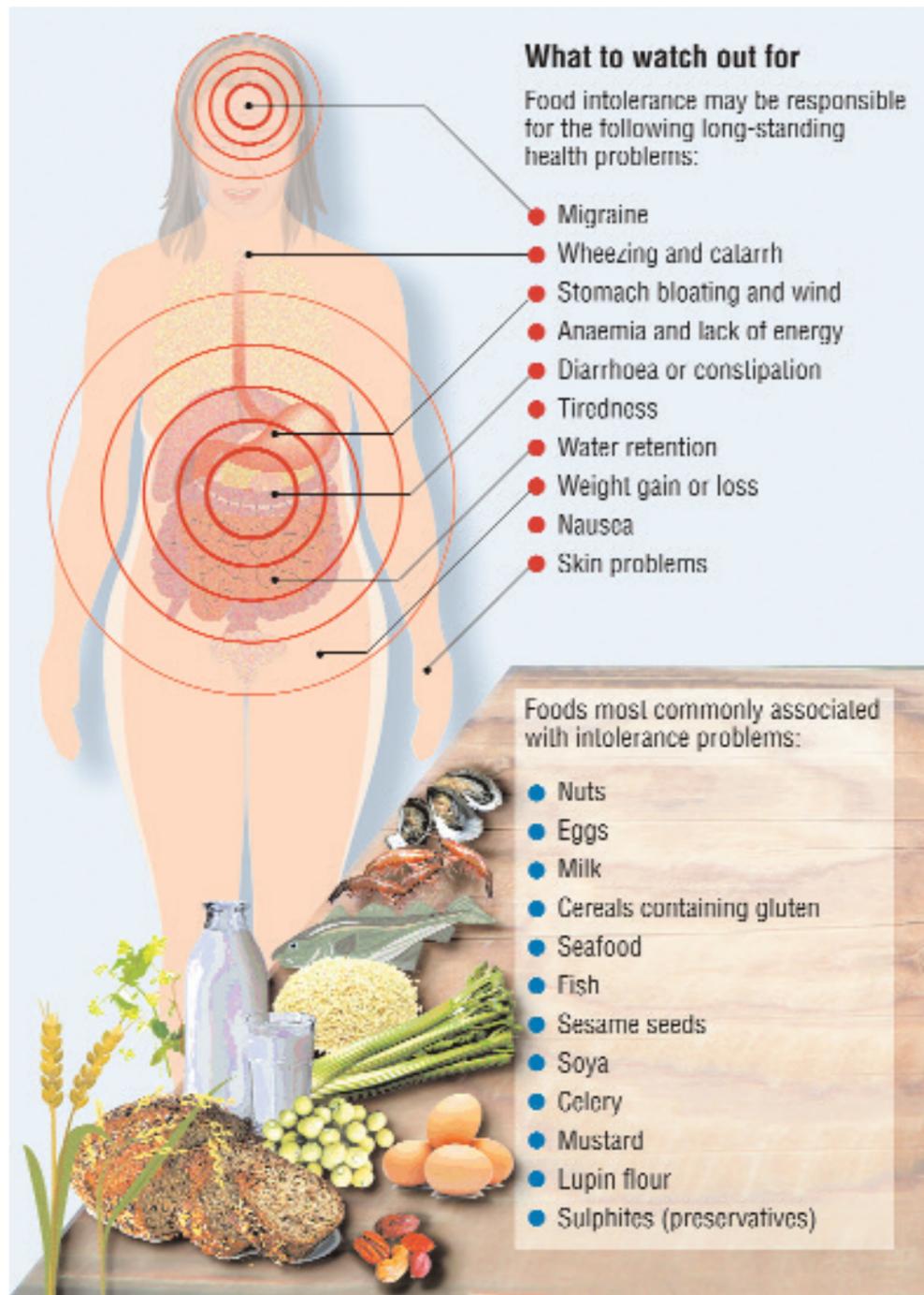


# New techniques in medicine

## Intolerance test could help

If you're finding it hard to shed that extra weight, it could be the result of food intolerance, according to **Judy Hobson**



**F**OOD INTOLERANCE could be the reason some of us find it more difficult than others to shed those extra pounds. So before embarking on yet another diet or healthy eating plan, you may well be advised to talk to your GP or a nutritionist about having a test to find out if this is indeed the case.

A pilot study has shown that persistently overweight people who cut out foods which they were found to be intolerant to not only lost weight – they also got relief from long-standing health problems such as migraine, catarrh and stomach bloating, as well as having more energy.

This is the first study to propose that cutting out certain foods might help overweight people with symptoms of food intolerance to lose weight and improve their wellbeing.

Thanks to removing certain foods from her diet, Janet Stocking, a 60-year-old grandmother of three from Stoke Ferry in Norfolk, can now make plans to fulfil a lifetime ambition to go diving off the Great Barrier Reef.

Since childhood Janet has suffered from sinus problems and catarrh. In addition, for the past ten years, she has also had weekly debilitating migraine headaches.

The sinus problems and catarrh meant Janet, who works in the family engineering business in Downham

Market could only dream about going scuba diving. But since excluding foods she was found to be intolerant to, Janet has not only lost a stone in weight, going down from 16 to 15 stones, but her health problems have disappeared.

The 12-week study was led by Dr Michael Walker of Cambridge Nutritional Sciences. Dr Walker wanted to determine whether weight loss could occur in permanently overweight people after they had eliminated foods they were found to be intolerant to while maintaining the same calorific intake.

In the study, 32 participants with at least three symptoms associated with food intolerance, who were 13kg to 20kg (2st to 3st 2lb) overweight and had tried unsuccessfully to diet, were given substitute foods to eat so that their calorie intake remained the same.

At the end of the 12 weeks,

the average weight loss was 6lb and participants reported having more energy, less bloating and improvement in general health.

The 'food detective' – an IgG ELISA (Enzyme Linked ImmunoSorbent Assay) test – was used in the study to detect raised levels of specific food IgG antibodies. The test is carried out on a drop of blood from a finger-prick and looks for raised levels of IgG antibodies to 59 of the most commonly eaten foods. These include eggs, cow's milk, soya, pineapple, yeast, rye, wheat, almonds and shellfish.

An increase in IgG levels against a certain food means the body is reacting to that food by producing antibodies to it and may indicate food intolerance. A study published last year showed that obese children have higher food specific levels of IgG antibodies than normal-

weight children. Another one, suggests that food IgG antibodies are not only involved in obesity but also contribute to atherosclerosis, narrowing of the arteries.

Dr Walker says: "The test does not diagnose food intolerance per se but provides a means of identifying the foods most likely to be causing the problem. After two years of research we have developed a simple kit that can be used at home and which gives results in less than an hour.

"Once people have identified the foods that are causing them problems, they can make simple changes to their diet and relieve the symptoms. However, we recommend people who get a positive result discuss making any significant changes in their diet with a health professional. The alternative way of identifying these trigger foods is an elimination diet where people

cut out foods one at a time and note improvements, but this is time-consuming and potentially inaccurate, as the IgG antibody thought to be involved in causing the symptoms associated with food intolerance can appear hours or days after the food is eaten."

After participants in the pilot study had taken the food detective test, their diet was modified according to the results, a record kept of all the food they consumed, and every fortnight they were weighed. At the conclusion, in addition to weight loss, the majority reported increased energy levels, less abdominal bloating, improved general health and skin condition.

### Find out more

■ The Food Detective costs £50. For more details, tel: 01353 863279, website: [www.food-detective.com](http://www.food-detective.com).

## Janet Stocking: Lost a stone in 12 weeks

### "Taking part in the study has changed my life"

**J**t was by chance that Janet Stocking, from Stoke Ferry in Norfolk, heard of a pilot study into the possible link between failure to lose weight and food intolerance being conducted by Dr Michael Walker of Cambridge Nutritional Sciences. A colleague of hers had seen an internet appeal for volunteers to take part.

To Janet's amazement she found she was intolerant to dairy products, eggs and soya. She says: "I grew up on a farm and so eggs, milk and cheese had always been the main part of my diet. If you were intolerant to something, I had always believed you had a reaction straightway and

knew you should avoid that food in the future. I never associated food intolerance with health problems or with making it difficult for people to lose weight."

For the study, Janet's calorie intake had to remain the same as it was before she excluded the foods she was found to be intolerant to.

Janet says: "As I was intolerant to soya and don't like rice milk, I did not drink any tea or coffee, because I don't like taking them without milk. I just drank lots of water. Instead of porridge in the morning, I had bacon, mushrooms and tomatoes. I was even able to have chocolate as long as it was plain dark chocolate and not dairy. I also had lots of

jacket potatoes with butter made from sunflower oil."

To Janet's delight, at the end of the 12-week study she had lost a stone. Not only that, her sinus problems and catarrh had disappeared and she no longer got weekly migraines.

She says: "The study has led me in the direction of healthy eating and this has meant I've been able to keep off the pounds. Taking part in this has changed my life."

"The biggest bonus is that I no longer have catarrh or sinus problems, which means I've been able to fulfil my lifelong ambition to learn to scuba dive. Another plus is that my weekly migraines have disappeared. Every Sunday I would wake up with a sick headache that



would last all day and put me out of action. I now realise that the weekend treats I used to have were triggering my headaches."

Determined to shed even more pounds, Janet has joined WeightWatchers. She is optimistic that by following WeightWatchers' healthy eating plan, in addition to cutting out those foods she knows make it difficult for her to lose weight, she will reach her target weight of 12 stones and get into a size 18 dress.