

HEALTH & NUTRITION GUIDE

High Histamine Foods Guide

Everything you need to know about histamine in food —
what to avoid, why it matters, and how to feel better.

8

Food Categories

50+

Foods Listed

10

Expert Tips

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What Is Histamine Intolerance?

Histamine intolerance occurs when the body accumulates more histamine than it can break down. This is often caused by reduced activity of the enzyme diamine oxidase (DAO), which is responsible for metabolising histamine in the gut.

Histamine is a natural chemical produced by your body and found in many foods. While it plays vital roles in immune response, digestion, and brain function, excess histamine from dietary sources can overwhelm your system — especially if DAO activity is compromised by genetics, gut damage, medications, or nutritional deficiencies.

Common Symptoms of Histamine Intolerance

System	Symptoms
Skin	Hives, itching, redness, eczema flares, flushing
Digestive	Bloating, diarrhea, nausea, stomach cramps, acid reflux
Respiratory	Nasal congestion, sneezing, asthma-like symptoms, difficulty breathing
Neurological	Headaches, migraines, brain fog, dizziness, anxiety
Cardiovascular	Rapid heartbeat (tachycardia), low blood pressure, chest tightness
Hormonal	Worsened PMS, irregular cycles, hormonal imbalances

■ Important Disclaimer

This guide is for informational purposes only. Individual tolerances vary greatly. Histamine intolerance shares symptoms with many conditions. Always seek a proper diagnosis from a healthcare professional before making significant dietary changes. A low-histamine diet is typically a short-term diagnostic tool, not a lifetime prescription.

High Histamine Foods by Category

The following categories cover the most significant dietary sources of histamine. Foods are classified by their typical histamine content and their potential to trigger reactions in sensitive individuals. Note that **histamine liberators** may have low intrinsic histamine but still trigger release of histamine stored in the body's mast cells.

Fish & Seafood		Histamine Level: VERY HIGH
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Canned tuna / sardines / mackerel	Very High	Histamine forms rapidly during preservation
Smoked salmon & smoked fish	Very High	Smoking & curing dramatically increases histamine
Anchovies	Very High	One of the highest dietary histamine sources
Shellfish (shrimp, crab, lobster)	High	Also a potent histamine liberator
Fish sauce & shrimp paste	Very High	Fermented; extremely concentrated histamine
Fresh fish (same-day catch)	Low-Med	Histamine rises quickly once fish dies

Aged & Fermented Dairy		Histamine Level: HIGH
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Aged cheeses (parmesan, cheddar, gouda)	Very High	Aging = bacterial histamine production
Blue cheeses (roquefort, gorgonzola)	Very High	Mold accelerates histamine formation
Camembert & brie	High	Surface-ripened; significant levels
Processed cheese spreads	Medium	Contain dairy fermentation by-products
Yogurt & kefir	Medium	Fermentation produces histamine
Buttermilk & sour cream	Medium	Fermented; may trigger sensitive individuals

Alcoholic Beverages		Histamine Level: HIGH
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Red wine	Very High	Highest of all wines; also a DAO inhibitor
Champagne & sparkling	High	Fermentation + carbonation increases load
Beer (especially dark)	High	Fermented grain + yeast = significant histamine
White wine	Medium	Lower than red but still problematic
Spirits (whiskey, rum)	Medium	Aged spirits contain more histamine
Kombucha	High	Fermented tea with high biogenic amines

Vegetables & Legumes		Histamine Level: MODERATE–HIGH
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Tomatoes & tomato products	Very High	High in histamine and also a liberator
Spinach (raw or cooked)	High	Contains significant free histamine
Eggplant / aubergine	High	One of the highest-histamine vegetables
Avocado	Medium	Histamine liberator; affects sensitive people
Sauerkraut / kimchi	Very High	Fermented; among the richest sources
Pickled vegetables	High	Fermentation + vinegar compounds the issue

Fruits		Histamine Level: MODERATE
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Citrus fruits (orange, lemon, lime)	High	Potent histamine liberators
Strawberries	High	Classic liberator; widely documented
Raspberries	High	Similar profile to strawberries
Pineapple	Medium	Contains histamine-releasing enzymes
Kiwi	Medium	Liberator; enzyme activity involved
Banana	Medium	Contains serotonin + histamine-like compounds
Dried fruits (raisins, apricots)	High	Concentrated histamine + sulfites often added

Condiments & Sauces		Histamine Level: HIGH
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Soy sauce & tamari	Very High	Fermented soy is extremely high in histamine
Vinegar (all types)	High	Acetic acid fermentation; avoid in sensitive cases
Ketchup & tomato paste	High	Double hit: tomatoes + fermentation/preservation
Mustard	Medium	Vinegar-based; triggers some individuals
Hot sauce & chili sauce	High	Vinegar + chili; dual histamine/liberation effect
Mayonnaise	Medium	Vinegar + sometimes tomato content

Meat & Processed Meats		Histamine Level: MODERATE–HIGH
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Salami, pepperoni, chorizo	Very High	Fermentation + curing; very high biogenic amines
Ham & prosciutto	High	Cured & aged; significant histamine
Hot dogs / frankfurters	High	Processed with preservatives that raise levels
Leftover cooked meat	Medium	Histamine builds with each hour after cooking
Smoked meats (bacon, etc.)	High	Smoking process increases histamine content
Fresh meat (eaten promptly)	Low	Fresh, promptly eaten meat is low-risk

Beverages & Extras		Histamine Level: MODERATE
Food Item	Level	Why It Matters
Coffee (regular & decaf)	Medium	Blocks DAO enzyme; amplifies effects
Black & green tea	Medium	Tannins inhibit DAO activity
Energy drinks	High	Multiple additives + caffeine = DAO inhibition
Chocolate & cocoa	High	Theobromine + histamine; common trigger
Licorice	Medium	Contains histamine-releasing compounds
Fermented soy products	Very High	Miso, tempeh, natto — all fermented

Understanding Histamine Levels

Level	Typical Range	What It Means for You
Very High	>50 mg/kg	Avoid entirely during elimination phase; reintroduce cautiously later.
High	20–50 mg/kg	Limit strictly; even small amounts may trigger symptoms in sensitive individuals.
Medium	5–20 mg/kg	Tolerated in small amounts by some; cumulative load matters.
Low	<5 mg/kg	Generally safe; freshness and preparation method still matter.

High-Histamine Foods

These foods contain pre-formed histamine produced by bacteria during fermentation, aging, spoilage, or processing. The older or more processed the food, the higher the histamine concentration.

Histamine Liberators

These foods may have low intrinsic histamine but trigger your body's mast cells to release stored histamine. Citrus, strawberries, tomatoes, and alcohol are classic liberators that can cause reactions even in 'fresh' form.

10 Practical Tips to Manage Histamine Intolerance

- 1 Eat fresh — buy and cook meat, fish, and vegetables the same day when possible.
- 2 Freeze promptly — if you can't eat fresh food immediately, freeze it right away to halt bacterial activity.
- 3 Avoid leftovers — histamine continues to build in cooked food sitting in the fridge.
- 4 Cook from scratch — pre-packaged, processed foods are far more likely to contain high histamine.
- 5 Read labels carefully — watch for vinegar, yeast extract, citric acid, and fermented ingredients.
- 6 Consider a DAO supplement — the enzyme diamine oxidase (DAO) helps break down dietary histamine.
- 7 Keep a food-symptom diary — identify your personal trigger foods since thresholds vary widely.
- 8 Work with a dietitian — a low-histamine elimination diet should be done under professional guidance.
- 9 Check medications — many common drugs (aspirin, NSAIDs, antidepressants) block DAO activity.
- 10 Vitamin C and B6 support natural histamine metabolism — discuss supplementation with your doctor.

✓ Foods That Support Histamine Breakdown

Not all news is bad! The following foods are generally considered **low-histamine** and some actively support DAO enzyme production:

- Fresh meat & poultry (eaten immediately after cooking)
- Most fresh vegetables (except spinach, tomatoes, eggplant, avocado)
- Rice, corn, millet, and quinoa
- Fresh fruits: apples, pears, blueberries, mango, melon
- Olive oil and coconut oil
- Herbal teas (chamomile, peppermint, nettle)
- Eggs (whites are a liberator; yolks are usually tolerated)
- Fresh herbs: basil, oregano, thyme (in moderation)

Quick Reference: Avoid vs. Choose

✗ High-Risk — Avoid	✓ Low-Risk — Choose Instead
Canned / smoked / pickled fish	Fresh fish cooked and eaten same day
Aged cheeses (parmesan, cheddar, blue)	Fresh mozzarella, ricotta, cream cheese
Red wine, beer, champagne	Water, herbal tea (limit alcohol overall)
Tomatoes, ketchup, tomato sauce	Cucumber, zucchini, leafy greens (not spinach)
Strawberries, citrus, dried fruit	Apples, pears, blueberries, grapes
Salami, hot dogs, cured/smoked meats	Fresh chicken, turkey, beef (cook & eat immediately)
Soy sauce, vinegar, fermented condiments	Fresh herbs, mild olive oil, fresh lemon zest
Chocolate, cocoa products	Carob (in moderation)
Sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, tempeh	Fresh steamed vegetables, plain rice
Leftover meals (especially protein-heavy)	Cook fresh in small batches where possible

Remember: histamine tolerance is highly individual. What triggers a reaction in one person may be fine for another. The goal of a low-histamine diet is to identify your personal threshold — not necessarily to eliminate all histamine-containing foods forever.

A Note from HBmag

At HBmag, our mission is to give you science-backed, actionable health information so you can make informed decisions about your wellbeing. This guide was compiled from peer-reviewed research, clinical dietetics resources, and established histamine food databases. For the latest articles on histamine intolerance, gut health, and supplement science, visit [HBmag.com](https://www.hbmag.com).