

# A Complete Guide to the Autoimmune Protocol (AIP) Diet

If you're living with an autoimmune condition like Hashimoto's thyroiditis, rheumatoid arthritis, or lupus, you might have heard about the Autoimmune Protocol (AIP) diet. It's more than just a trend—it's a lifestyle change aimed at reducing inflammation, improving gut health, and easing autoimmune symptoms. But what exactly is the AIP diet, and how does it work? Let's dive in.

## What is the AIP Diet?

The AIP diet is a version of the Paleo diet designed specifically for individuals with autoimmune diseases. It focuses on eliminating foods that could trigger inflammation or immune responses while emphasizing nutrient-dense, whole foods that support the body's healing processes.

At its core, the AIP diet is about elimination and reintroduction. You first remove potential inflammatory foods from your diet, allow your body to heal, and then gradually reintroduce certain foods to identify any triggers.

## How the AIP Diet Works

### Phase 1: Elimination

During the first phase, you'll cut out a wide range of foods that are known to potentially trigger inflammation, gut issues, or immune responses. While this may seem restrictive, the goal is to reduce your autoimmune symptoms by giving your body a break from these common irritants. We can help reduce side effects from eliminating by helping improve your body's methylation and gut health. **Set up an appointment with Dr. Strobel to discuss how this works and find out which supplements and nutrients are needed to improve your success rate.**

#### Foods to Eliminate:

- Grains: Wheat, rice, oats, corn, and all other grains.
- Legumes: Beans, lentils, peanuts, soy.
- Dairy: Milk, cheese, butter, yogurt.
- Processed foods: Foods with artificial preservatives, flavors, or additives.
- Refined sugars: Sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, and other sweeteners.
- Vegetable oils: Soybean oil, corn oil, canola oil, and other refined oils.
- Nuts and seeds: All types, including flaxseeds, chia seeds, and seed-based spices.
- Nightshades: Tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, peppers (including spices like paprika and cayenne).
- Alcohol and caffeine: Coffee, tea, and alcoholic beverages.
- Eggs: Although nutrient-dense, eggs are eliminated in this phase to reduce the risk of immune reactions.

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## Phase 2: Reintroduction

After a period of elimination (typically 30–60 days), you begin to slowly reintroduce foods one by one. This is where you find out what works best for your body. By adding foods back in gradually, you can observe how each one affects your symptoms.

It's essential to track your body's responses during this phase—look out for signs like fatigue, digestive discomfort, joint pain, skin issues, or other flare-ups. These could indicate that your body is sensitive to the food you've reintroduced.

## What to Eat on the AIP Diet

While the list of eliminated foods may seem overwhelming, there's still plenty you can eat. The AIP diet focuses on nutrient-dense foods that help heal the gut and reduce inflammation.

### AIP-Approved Foods:

- Vegetables (except nightshades): Broccoli, cauliflower, leafy greens, carrots, squash, and more.
- Fruits: Berries, apples, pears, bananas, and other low-glycemic fruits.
- Quality meats: Grass-fed beef, poultry, pork, organ meats, and wild-caught fish.
- Healthy fats: Coconut oil, avocado oil, olive oil, and fats from animal sources like lard or tallow.
- Bone broth: Packed with collagen and gelatin, bone broth supports gut healing.
- Fermented foods: Sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha, and other fermented veggies to help boost gut health.
- Herbs and spices (excluding seeds): Garlic, basil, rosemary, ginger, turmeric, and cinnamon.

These foods provide a wealth of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory compounds essential for supporting immune function and repairing the gut lining.

## Benefits of the AIP Diet

Many individuals with autoimmune conditions report significant improvements in their symptoms after following the AIP diet. While results vary from person to person, the benefits often include:

- Reduced inflammation: Eliminating inflammatory foods can lower systemic inflammation, easing symptoms like joint pain, swelling, and fatigue.
- Improved gut health: The AIP diet focuses on gut-friendly foods that promote healthy digestion and may help repair a "leaky gut," which is believed to contribute to autoimmune disease.
- Decreased autoimmunity flare-ups: By identifying and avoiding food triggers, many people experience fewer autoimmune flare-ups and more consistent symptom management.
- Increased energy: Once inflammatory foods are removed, energy levels often improve, helping you feel more alert and vibrant throughout the day.

## Challenges of the AIP Diet

While the AIP diet offers many benefits, it's not without its challenges. The most common difficulties include:

- Restrictiveness: The elimination phase can feel limiting, especially when dining out or attending social events. Planning meals and bringing your own food may become necessary.

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- Time-consuming: Since the diet focuses on whole, unprocessed foods, meal preparation can be more time-consuming than with a standard diet.
- Reintroduction process: Finding your specific food triggers can take time, and it requires patience and careful observation.

However, many people find the benefits far outweigh the challenges once they experience symptom relief.

## Is the AIP Diet Right for You?

The AIP diet can be incredibly beneficial for those with autoimmune diseases, but it's not for everyone. Always consult with a healthcare professional before starting any elimination diet. Working closely with a nutritionist or doctor ensures you're getting the nutrients you need and following the plan correctly.

Remember, every person's body responds differently, and while the AIP diet may help some, it's important to find the approach that works best for your unique needs.

## Getting Started on the AIP Diet

If you're ready to try the AIP diet, here are a few steps to help you get started:

1. Plan your meals: Prepare a list of AIP-approved recipes, stock up on compliant foods, and plan your meals ahead of time.
2. Journal your progress: Keep a food diary to track what you're eating and note any changes in symptoms.
3. Be patient: Healing through diet takes time. Stick with the elimination phase for at least 30 days before beginning the reintroduction process.
4. Get support: Join AIP diet communities or consult with a healthcare provider who understands autoimmune conditions to get personalized guidance.

## Final Thoughts

The AIP diet is a powerful tool for managing autoimmune diseases. By focusing on reducing inflammation, healing the gut, and identifying food sensitivities, many people have found relief from their symptoms and regained a higher quality of life. If you're considering the AIP diet, working with a healthcare professional ensures a safe and effective approach tailored to your individual needs.