

## Media release

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### **Salicylate sensitivity is still a puzzle to be solved**

Keeping a food journal may aid doctors in diagnosing the cause of salicylate sensitivity in individuals affected by the condition.

Dr Stephen Adelstein, clinical immunologist at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital says due to the lack of reliable information or evidence currently available about salicylate sensitivity, it has become quite a controversial topic.

People know they feel unwell to varying degrees after eating foods containing salicylates and other preservatives, but pathologists are unable to measure a marker of the adverse effects that occur in some people because they don't actually know what to measure yet.

"We can't measure anything that is diagnostic of reactions to this family of compounds, and we know that reactions to these food ingredients are not caused by an antibody reaction," says Dr Adelstein.

Salicylates are chemicals that occur naturally in plants. They act as a natural preservative in many fruits and vegetables, and are also present in nuts, herbs, spices, jams, honey, yeast extracts, tea, coffee, juices, beer, wines and some medication (aspirin is a salicylate).

The prevalence of salicylates makes it difficult to determine which foods are causing the symptoms of sensitivity such as headaches, muscle cramps, tiredness and flushing. Dr Adelstein therefore advises his patients to keep a food diary and to try to correlate symptoms with consumption of particular foods or food ingredients.

"The challenge is knowing where the problem comes from and which combination of foods pushes a person over their threshold," he says.

Dr Adelstein is hopeful more information about salicylate sensitivity will be revealed in the future, along with a way to measure the adverse reactions that result when some people consume too much.

"It's probably a similar situation to where we were with coeliac disease about a century ago," he says. "People knew they couldn't tolerate some foods, and the exact problem couldn't be found at the time, but now we know it's due to a reaction to gluten and we can measure an abnormal immune reaction to it. Well, it's probably going to be similar with salicylate sensitivity. One day we'll solve this puzzle."

The full article can be found in the [current edition](#) of ePathWay.

### **Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia**

The RCPA is the leading organisation representing pathologists in Australasia. Its mission is to train and support pathologists and to improve the use of pathology testing to achieve better healthcare.

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