


# The Food Factor

Modified Diet Can Improve  
AD/HD Symptoms in Children



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**M**any parents will tell you that certain foods can significantly change their child's behavior. Since the early 1990s, a number of well-designed studies have set out to investigate what parents have been reporting all along. The highly respected British medical journal *The Lancet* published a study in February 2011 that showed that a restrictive elimination diet can cause marked improvement in the symptoms of children diagnosed with AD/HD.

One hundred children with AD/HD were divided into two distinct groups: one set of children was assigned to a restricted elimination diet the other to a typical American diet consisting of generally "healthy" foods. The elimination group had a limited food plan that consisted of rice, vegetables, white meat, fruit and water. The purpose of this food plan was to eliminate the most common allergenic foods that

could possibly increase immune inflammatory reactions that negatively impact brain function, and this included eggs, soy, wheat, dairy, and corn.

During the initial component of the study, a whopping 78 percent of the children in the low-allergy food group had significant improvement in their AD/HD symptoms. To confirm this startling finding, the researchers then put the allergenic foods back into the children's diets and observed that 63 percent of the children had a noticeable relapse in AD/HD symptoms. It should be noted that these children were tested for food allergies using standard laboratory methods of IgG testing for reactive foods. They found that the laboratory tests did not match up well with the results, and they concluded that the restricted diet could be useful in the treatment of AD/HD regardless of IgG blood test results. In

other words, for some reason, the lab tests did not reveal all of the possible types of reactions that occur and that a trial withdrawal of possible allergens is worthwhile.

Researchers have been looking into these connections between diet and behavior as early as 1993, when another study explored the effectiveness of a hypoallergenic diet for children diagnosed with AD/HD. Of the 78 children in this study who were placed on a "few foods" elimination diet, more than three-fourths of the children showed improvement. What was really interesting was that the researchers took an additional step to confirm these observations. In 19 of these cases, they disguised the suspected foods and additives by mixing them with other tolerated. The results of a crossover trial on these 19 children showed that even when the offending

foods were "hidden," and the children and observers did not know that they had been exposed to the offending foods, the children showed a significant worsening of behavior and impairment on psychological test performance. Larger studies are needed to confirm this data.

Studies like these support the growing scientific belief that brain function, both cognitive and behavioral, can be improved with a hypoallergenic food plan. However, seldom do chronic conditions have a single cause, or a single therapy that will fully remediate the condition. Most often children with AD/HD need multiple therapies and interventions, but eliminating allergenic foods such as wheat, dairy, corn, eggs, soy as well as sugar and artificial additives can help a great deal. ■