

Dietary Treatment for Hyperactive Children

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Results of this study suggest that a low-additive, low-salicylate diet has a place in the treatment of children with behavior and learning problems. Dietary factors should be considered as aggravating the underlying predispositions in susceptible children rather than as causing hyperactivity; a positive outcome from dietary intervention is one of degree. A group of 516 children (mean age = 7.8 years) received a low-additive, low-salicylate diet as part of long term management. A positive response was obtained in 79.5% of the children. A normal range of behavior was achieved in 54.5% of the 25% in whom diet therapy was necessary but not sufficient; half also required stimulant medication. Almost 50% of the participants limited or excluded other foods, particularly chocolate, milk, and wheat. An age effect was evident – more responders were in the under-9 group. The likelihood of a positive outcome was higher if there was a family history of allergy or intolerance to any food. The concept of being a “diet detective” stimulated an inquiring attitude in the children using diet therapy for self-management.