

## Why Can't My Child Behave?

4th edition

and hyperactive children's behavior. Although many of the children reacted to food dyes and preservatives, none of them were sensitive to these substances alone.

"Even though the research design of both of the Egger et al studies has been described as being 'too good to be true' (Podell, 1985, p. 120), the studies do provide impetus for additional work to determine the relationship of individual patterns of sensitivities to social behavior in children."

### Problems with the early studies

There were many problems with the studies conducted in the 1970s. Generally, they bore little resemblance to the diet as it was actually being used by parents, and numerous mistakes were made by the researchers. Nevertheless, most of the studies yielded some very positive results, but critics and the industry consultants who wrote extensively of them overlooked these. In some cases, a researcher who first reported positive data later reversed himself and claimed his study demonstrated the opposite. Examples are shown below.

**The following are researcher's quotes from their papers printed in medical journals:**

"The results of this study strongly suggest that a diet free of most natural salicylates, artificial flavors, and artificial colors reduced the perceived hyperactivity of some children suffering from hyperkinetic impulse disorder."

C. Keith Conners, Ph.D. et al, *Pediatrics*, Vol 58, no. 2, August 1976

"The results of this study offer data that a diet free of artificial flavors and colors results in a reduction of symptoms in some hyperactive children."

J. Ivan Williams, Ph.D. et al, *Pediatrics*, Vol. 16, No. 6, June 1978

"Our results suggest that the administration of food colorings may affect normal development, and they mandate a more critical evaluation of the effects of food colorings in both animals and children. Our results also suggest that hyperactivity should not be the sole factor investigated, and that measures of the effects of food coloring on cognitive function must be carefully evaluated in any future study."

Bennett A. Shaywitz, et al, *Annals of Neurology*, Vol. 4, No. 2, August 1978

These are the quotes we were discussing

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**Another early study:** The 1978 Harley study at the University of Wisconsin, funded by the food industry lobby (the Nutrition Foundation), has been frequently referred to as negative despite the fact that:

13 of the 36 mothers

14 of the 30 fathers

6 of the 36 teachers

of the school-aged children rated them as improved on the diet.

Of the 10 preschool children tested, all 10 mothers and 4 of the 7 fathers rated the children's behavior as improved on the diet.

**Study designs did not follow Feingold Program:** In view of the many mistakes in the study designs, it is remarkable the children improved at all. The actual dietary habits of families involved in most of the research studies are very different from those of the typical Feingold Association member. Some of the more dramatic deviations are noted:

**Feingold Program:** "A successful response to the diet depends on 100% compliance" (*The Feingold Cookbook*, p.8)

**Deviation:** "The analysis of our data in terms of dietary infractions indicate the children made approximately one to two dietary infractions a week during our study" (letter from Dr. Harley, January 24, 1977).

**Feingold Program:** "Use only those foods listed in the Stage One Foodlist..." (*The Feingold Handbook*, p. 5).

**Deviation:** "Other food additives such as BHA, BHT, MSG, nitrites, nitrates, etc. were not given consideration in this study." (letter from Dr. Harley, June 4, 1976)

The Williams study did not eliminate salicylates, the children cheated, and they ingested synthetic dye each day in the form of colored pills!

**Feingold Program:** "The diet is usually not effective if the child is receiving behavior-modifying drugs" (*The Feingold Cookbook*, p. 9).

It can take an additional 30 to 40 days for a child to respond once behavior-modifying medication has been discontinued.

**Deviation:** None of the studies addressed this consideration, and the children in the Williams study received medication during half of the study.

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**Feingold Program:** Parents beginning the Program are asked to keep a daily diary and to note behavior at least once a day.

**Deviation:** The children's behavior in the Harley study was rated only once a week, making the ratings very insensitive to variations.

### **Other problems with the early studies**

The dosage of dye in the challenge material was typically 26 mg. Swanson & Kinsborne found that this was an error, and that the typical amount ingested by a child was between 76 and 150 mg.

One researcher (Dr. Williams) acknowledged that the children found the cookies (which contained the dye) to be very filling and often did not eat all of them.

Children who are well established on the diet frequently do not react to a challenge of synthetic additives or salicylates. Many report that unless they go back to consuming them on a regular basis, there is little or no reaction. This was overlooked in the Mattes study.

### **Nutritional criticism not supported**

The FDA California study conducted by Dr. Bernard Weiss found that the Feingold diet was nutritionally satisfactory. A major criticism it has received is the temporary restriction of some salicylate fruits high in vitamin C. However, the allowed fruits and vegetables include many that are rich in vitamin C. A half grapefruit provides the entire RDA of vitamin C, and tropical fruits such as papaya and kiwi are excellent sources, rivaling oranges.

After a few weeks' elimination, most people are able to return some or all of the natural salicylates into their diet.

**Note:** A 1997 National Academy of Sciences study of 12,000 people found that 99% of them ate up to an average of 327 milligrams of artificial food colors every day, yet many of the early food dye studies tested the effects of only twenty to thirty milligrams.