

## HYPERACTIVITY NOT LINKED TO FOOD ADDITIVES

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Eight years ago, a California doctor proposed that food additives caused hyperactivity in children. Since then, the Feingold Diet has been a hot conversation topic among nutritionists and parents.

Although some parents say the Feingold Diet helped their children, few researchers are willing to agree that there's enough scientific evidence to support those claims.

The National Advisory Committee on Hyperkinesia and Food Additives reviewed all the research and concluded there was no evidence that hyperactivity was associated with specific food additives. But they also stated there was no reason to discourage families who wish to use the diet. In fact, the diet may work for some children but not because of the food additives.

There are a number of reasons why the diet may seem to calm some children. One reason is that foods that are banned by the diet because they include additives known as salicylates also have high amounts of sugar. Salicylates are common in foods like candy, pies, soft drinks, and sweet rolls. If you eliminate those foods, you're eliminating a lot of sugar. Sugar does not contribute to hyperactivity, but overall the child's diet is much improved (more fruits and vegetables for example), and that could contribute to better behavior.

Another factor is psychological expectation. If a parent thinks the special diet will solve the problem, then he or she is likely to look for positive changes in the child and believe the diet is responsible.

The Feingold Diet also is strict. It's difficult for many families to stay on it. As a result, the parents may pay more attention to the child as well as to what he or she is eating. It's possible this extra attention affects the child more than the diet itself. As a result, the child's behavior improves.

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