

HACSG News and Articles

Pester Power or Parent Power??

15 July 2020

Put an end to child-friendly characters on unhealthy food and drink, say parents
'Pester Power or Parent Power?', a new report from the [Children's Food Campaign](#) and [Food Active](#) has revealed that parents and carers want to see an end to the use of popular children's characters and brand mascots on food and drink high in fat, salt and sugar.

Results from 942 UK parents, who shared their views in an online survey in Winter 2019, found that:

- 9 in 10 (91%) of the 942 parents taking part in the research say that the use of child-friendly characters on food and drink leads to their children requesting or pestering for those products.
- More than 8 in 10 (84%) parents said characters should be removed from unhealthy sweets, confectionery and snack products
- Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) agreed that the use of children's characters makes it more difficult to feed their children a healthy diet.

Parents also reported how popular characters from TV and films have a powerful effect on the food and drink their children ask for and notice whilst in the shops. Whilst parents do not always give into their children's pestering, many agreed that using these characters often makes their parenting job more difficult, especially if they take their children shopping with them.

Whilst some supermarkets including Tesco, Lidl, ASDA and Sainsburys have started to remove child-friendly characters from high sugar cereals, parents revealed this marketing tactic is an issue across a wide range of unhealthy products including flavoured yogurts, chocolate and sweet confectionery and cupcake kits, so there is much more to be done. With the UK Prime Minister's announcement on addressing obesity imminent, the organisations are calling on the Government and food companies to listen to parents' views and support them by introducing policies to restrict use of child-friendly characters to healthier products only. Parents also clearly want supermarkets to take responsibility too, by removing unhealthy products designed to appeal to children at their eye level on shelves, as well as store entrances, aisle ends, tills and checkouts.

[Click here](#) to read the news article (**NB.** Link live at 0001 GHT on 16 /7/20)

[Click here](#) to download the full report. (**NB.** Link live at 0001 GMT on 16/7/20)

[Join the webinar](#) on Tuesday 21 July 2020 at 1100 GMT.

Artificial Sweeteners make you eat more

7th August 2016

Researchers in Australia have found that the artificial sweeteners trick the brain in to thinking it is getting a sugary, high-calorie treat say the scientists.

When our bodies fail to get the sugary boost our brains expect they compensate by making us feel peckish and reach for more food.

This is a blow to millions of people who consume the calorie-free sugar substitutes, hoping to lose weight. The sweetener used in the research is sucralose, which is sold in the UK under the brand name Splenda. It is also found in Robinson's Fruit Shoot – No Added Sugar drinks (popular with children), Heinz Salad Cream 70% less fat, Wrigley's Double mint Sugar Free Gum and Sugar Free Red Bull. And possibly other products – so check ingredient labels.

Little was previously known about the effect of sweeteners on the brain, the research team in Sydney, Australia also detected Hyperactivity and Insomnia. The Research Team Leader, Greg Neely said "When sweetness versus energy is out of balance, the brain recalibrates and increased calories consumed".

Nutritional Supplements Help Improve Behaviour

18th March 2016

The behaviour of disruptive children in an East London school has been dramatically improved after they were given nutritional supplements for three months, an Oxford University research project has found.

The children, aged from 13 to 16, were given Wellteen supplements, produced by Vitabiotics, or a placebo. Levels of vitamins, minerals and omega-3 in the blood were measured throughout the trial, and their behaviour was measured in tests and from school disciplinary records.

The behaviour of the students given the supplements improved dramatically during the three months, while that of the placebo group worsened, say the researchers.

The children all attend the Robert Clack secondary school.

The supplements, which include 25 nutrients such as cranberry and green tea extracts, iron, zinc and vitamins C, B6 and B12, are designed to improve mood, behaviour, and brain function.

Ritalin use Soars as Prescriptions reach almost One Million a Year

3rd November 2015

Tony Lloyd, Chief Executive of the ADHD Foundation said, children were being let down by being prescribed the drugs for ADHD too readily.

NHS figures show that 922,200 prescriptions are issued per year for Methylphenidate hydrochloride, the chemical name for Ritalin and similar medications, that equates to 2,500 prescriptions a day.

Last year a leading brain scientist claimed ADHD was not a disease but rather a “description” of symptoms, which can be suffered at some point by most people.

(HACSG comment: Why is there still a reluctance to suggest a change of diet and nutritional supplements, which is less questionable??)

Daily Mail 17th August 2015

Video Games May Make Children Dislike School

3rd November 2015

Oxford University Researchers have found that children who spend their evenings engrossed in video games are likely to do less well at school.

These children are less interested in lessons, more aggressive than their peers and more likely to be Hyperactive. Reasons given range from fast moving games eroding attention span, to addicted youngsters dodging homework.

The study published in the Journal: Psychology of Popular Media Culture, found video games may have some benefits if used in moderation.

Fluoridation – ADHD Link

3rd November 2015

Researchers Professor Christine Till and Ashley Malin BSc(HONS), MA at York University, Toronto, Canada have been comparing water fluoridation and ADHD rates since 1992.

The USA States with higher fluoridation also have higher ADHD numbers. By 2011 every 15% increase in Fluoride was being matched by an additional 131,000 ADHD diagnoses. Further research is called for. 90% of Fluoride added to water is not pharmaceutical grade Sodium Fluoride, instead Fluorosilicic Acid is used which is a waste product of the phosphate fertiliser industry. Studies suggest fluorosilicic acid can leach lead from water pipes.

Reference (16978) Malin, AJ & Till c. Environmental Health 2015; 14:17

Exercise – an ADHD Medication

16th November 2014

About two-thirds of US children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) take some form of prescription medication to treat it.

While ADHD makes it difficult for children to pay attention and control impulsive behaviour, powerful stimulant drugs like Ritalin and Adderall help to improve focus and self-control. The drugs come at a price, however, since many of the side effects are worse than ADHD itself (think brain damage, personality changes, sudden death, and suicide...). This is particularly tragic since many of these children probably were not offered a far safer, natural solution that might help curb their symptoms: exercise.

As The Atlantic recently reported, new research suggests “exercise is ADHD medication,”¹ and should be “prescribed” to any child who’s struggling to maintain focus and resist distractions at school (or elsewhere).

Exercise Is a Powerful Tool for Relieving ADHD Symptoms

Research published in the journal Pediatrics found that kids who engaged in a regular physical activity program had improved cognitive performance and brain function. Specifically, the kids showed an improvement in executive control, which includes inhibition (the ability to maintain focus), working memory, and cognitive flexibility (or switching between tasks). Executive functioning is often impaired in children with ADHD, which means exercise may directly help to improve symptoms.

To read the full article [click here](#)

OMEGA 3 & 6 ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS do make a beneficial difference for ADHD

29th July 2014

Research carried out by Baragan Perez EJ, Manfrd Dopfner and Deiter Breuer titled ‘A Randomised Clinical Trial on the Efficacy and Safety of Omega- 3&6 Fatty Acids, Methylphenidate, and a Combined Treatment in Children with ADHD’

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Stress Drives us to Sugar

29th July 2014

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They found that Hormones Activated when we feel anxious or stressed have been found in taste cells, stimulating our desire for sweetness. The findings published in the Journal of Neuroscience June 2014. These stress hormones, called, Glucocorticoids act directly on the Taste Receptor cells located on the tongue, affecting how they respond to sugary foods. An Extra Note to this: As a matter of interest, when there is a deficiency of ZINC, which is involved with Hormone function (amongst many other things- and Zinc is one of the most important minerals for health) the sense of taste and smell are affected and when there is a deficiency of Zinc there can be a keenness for Sweet stuff or very strong flavoured food. Zinc deficiency is seen in Hyperactivity and ADHD, stress and anxiety.

Breakfast Clubs

22nd May 2013

Almost half (45%) of education staff believe that without a breakfast club, pupils who attend them wouldn't have any food before lessons, according to a survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL).

Almost a quarter (23%) believe that parents are having to rely on breakfast clubs to feed their children due to lack of money at home, caused by unemployment.

According to 77% of respondents, making sure pupils eat the most important meal of the day means that pupils' concentration is better while 71% say it also improves their ability to learn. A classroom teacher from a primary school in Kent said: "Although there is a charge for our breakfast club, we have accessed funding for those pupils on free school meals and the breakfast club had an effect on their attendance, concentration and being in school for the start of lessons."

To read the full Association of Teachers and Lecturers Press release, [click here](#)

The Food Hospital – “Kids Special”

24th October 2012

As part of the Channel 4 programme The Food Programme “Kids special” a GP and dietician investigated traditional party food to see if sausage rolls, cakes, crisps and fizzy drinks “really send kids wild”.

They held 2 parties, one where the children were given healthy food and a second where the children were given traditional party food including brightly coloured cakes, sweets and fizzy drinks.

When they tested the children's behaviour, those at the first party had: 0 mean behaviours to

other children; 8 aggressive behaviours; 120 bad behaviour incidents; 30 hyperactive incidents.

Those at the second had 69 mean behaviours to other children; 63 aggressive incidents; 720 bad behaviour incidents; 163 hyperactive incidents. Those in the healthy food group did 48% better at puzzles and motor skills than those in the additive group. Even the GP and the Dietician were surprised at the scale of difference it made to the children.

Cutting Out Some Foods – a help to ADHD children

21st February 2011

Research carried out in the Netherlands and reported in the Lancet Medical Journal suggested that children with ADHD should be tried in special diets to trace foods/additives, they may be triggering the disruptive behaviour.

The researchers say that the diets should be tried before Drugs are prescribed. Research shows that restricting the range of foods given to children with ADHD can lead to Significantly Better Behaviour.

Professor Jan Bultelaar one of the lead researchers at Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, said: "We think dietary intervention should be tried in all cases of ADHD". Contact us to obtain a copy of the complete Research Paper.

Western Diet – A link to ADHD

1st June 2010

A new study from Perth's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research shows an association between ADHD and a 'Western-style' diet in adolescents.

The research findings have just been published online in the International Journal of Attention Disorders.

Leader of Nutrition Studies at the Institute, Associate Professor Wendy Oddy, said the study examined the dietary patterns of 1,800 adolescents from the long-term Raine Study and classified diets into Healthy or 'Western' patterns.

'We found a diet high in the Western pattern of foods was associated with more than double the risk of having an ADHD diagnosis compared with a diet low in the Western pattern. After adjusting for numerous other social and family influences,' Dr Oddy said.

'We looked at the dietary patterns amongst the adolescents and compared the diet information against whether or not the adolescent had received a diagnosis of ADHD by the age of 14 years. In our study, 115 adolescents had been diagnosed with ADHD, 91 boys and 24 girls'.

A 'healthy' pattern is a diet high in fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains and fish. It tends to be higher in omega-3 fatty acids, folate and fibre. A 'Western pattern' is a diet with a trend towards takeaway foods, confectionery, processed, fried and refined foods. These diets tend to be higher in total fat, saturated fat, refined sugar and sodium. '

When we looked at specific foods, having an ADHD diagnosis was associated with a diet high in takeaway foods, processed meats, red meat, high fat dairy products and confectionery,' Dr Oddy said.

'We suggest that a Western dietary pattern may indicate the adolescent has a less optimal fatty acid profile, whereas a diet higher in omega-3 fatty acids is thought to hold benefits for mental health and optimal brain function.'

It also may be that the Western dietary pattern doesn't provide enough essential micronutrients that are needed for brain function, particularly attention and concentration, or that a Western diet might contain more colours, flavours and additives that have been linked to an increase in ADHD symptoms. It may also be that impulsivity, which is a characteristic of ADHD, leads to poor dietary choices such as quick snacks when hungry'.

Dr Oddy said that whilst this study suggests that diet may be implicated in ADHD, more research is needed to determine the nature of the relationship.

Food Additive Labels

20th April 2010

Following research carried out in 2007 at the University of Southampton, which was funded by the FSA (Food Standards Agency) certain Artificial Food Colourings and one preservative were found (for the second FSA funded study) to cause Hyperactivity.

The EU, from 20th July 2010 require all products containing the 6 colourings and preservative, Sodium Benzoate, to carry an extra label "may have an adverse effect on Activity and Attention in Children".

The six colourings are Tartrazine (E102), Quinoline Yellow(E104), Sunset Yellow (E110), Carmosine (E122), Ponceau 4R (E124) and Allura Red(E129). There are a further 12 Artificial colourings which the HACSG and others feel should be included but which were not studied in the Southampton Research.

The HACSG would like to see a ban on all Artificial Colourings, not just a warning label for six colours, but after 33 years I suppose we must still be patient and be grateful for the EU action taken so far.

BM Journal – Press Release on Food Additives and Hyperactivity

23rd May 2008

A trial of removing food additives should be considered for hyperactive children

A properly supervised trial eliminating colours and preservatives from the diet of hyperactive children should be considered a part of the standard treatment, says an editorial in this week's BMJ.

Although a substantial body of evidence shows a link between attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and artificial food colourings and preservatives, removing them is still considered as an alternative rather than a standard treatment for ADHD, writes Professor Andrew Kemp from the University of Sydney.

In contrast, despite a lack of evidence for its effectiveness, the use of alternative medicine is widespread – up to 50% of children attending tertiary children's hospitals in the UK and Australia have used it in the past year.

Of the three main treatments for ADHD in children – drugs, behavioural therapy, and dietary modification – only drugs and dietary modification are supported by data from several trials. Yet, behavioural therapy, which has no scientific evidence base, is still thought of as necessary for “adequate treatment”, he says.

So why, despite evidence to the contrary, does the removal of food additives remain an alternative rather than a standard part of treatment for ADHD, asks Kemp? Data published in 2007 showed that normal (not hyperactive) children were significantly more hyperactive after they ate a mixture of food colourings and a preservative (sodium benzoate), with obvious implications for children with ADHD.

In light of these findings, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) reviewed the evidence linking preservatives and colourings with hyperactive behaviours from 22 studies between 1975 and 1994 and two additional meta-analyses.

16 of the studies reported positive effects in at least some of the children. However, the EFSA pointed out that hyperactivity has a wide range of social and biological causes, and exclusively focusing on food additives may “detract from the provision of adequate treatment” for children with the disorder. But, argues Kemp, to discount the accumulating evidence of dietary factors may also do this.

Increasing numbers of children are taking drugs for hyperactivity – 2.4% of children in the state of Western Australia. Removing colours and preservatives is a relatively harmless intervention, so a properly supervised and evaluated trial period of eliminating them should be considered.

Fish Oils Protect Babies from Eczema

November 23, 2019

Reported in the press 1st Feb 2012 Taking Fish oils in Pregnancy can protect your baby from eczema. The Australian scientists that Omega 3 Fatty Acids passed on via the Placenta affects the baby's immune system which protects against eczema. More research is needed to find out if Fish Oils could protect against Hayfever and Asthma. The Government advises against pregnant women consuming more than 4 portions of oily fish a week. This is due to possible contamination by Mercury and other heavy metals PS The HACSG have noticed in Hair Mineral Analysis raised levels of Mercury and further enquires have found that the children were having Tuna/Salmon several times a day. It seems the smaller oily fish, Mackerel, Sardines are more likely to be lower in Mercury.

Fish Diet Linked To Brainy Babies

November 23, 2019

This was reported in the Daily Mail 2nd Feb 2012 Women who eat oily fish during pregnancy are more likely to have brainy children according to researchers, As part of a £5 million European Commission study into diet, Spanish researchers examined 2,000 women before and after pregnancy. Their children were tested with verbal intelligence quizzes and on their verbal and motor skills, the children whose mothers consumed the oily fish did the best in the tests. Omega 3 in particular contributed to the healthy development of the eyes and brain of the developing foetus.

Disruptive Pupils Prove to be Faster Learners

November 23, 2019

A study found that disruptive pupils, including some with ADHD were 9 months ahead of quieter pupils in reading and maths. Experts from the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at Durham University looked at teachers evaluations of 12,251 4 and 5 year olds of all abilities and found that those children who were overactive and tended to blurt out answers do better than expected because they were found to be engaging in the lessons more. HACSG comment; It has been shown that many Hyperactive/ ADHD children are very bright.