Understanding the Link to Food Coloring and ADHD

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Linking Food Coloring and ADHD

Despite numerous studies, there is no consensus on which food additives may be to blame for hyperactivity, and since additives are in everything from breakfast cereal to vitamin water, it can be particularly difficult to spot the potential danger. Savvy consumers must learn which additives to look for, and how to adjust their menu to see if these dyes and preservatives are contributing to ADHD symptoms Let's take a look at food coloring and ADHD and the connections.

Which Food Additives Lead to Hyperactivity?

Several studies have hunted for a link between hyperactivity disorders and artificial food additives, particularly food colorings. The results are far from conclusive: experts suggest that there’s not enough evidence of a connection to expect an improvement in behavior just by avoiding the additives.

On the other hand, studies do suggest that certain people may experience hyperactive behavior if they consume these popular food additives:

- Yellow No.6 (sunset yellow).
- Yellow No. 10 (quinolone yellow).
- Yellow No. 5 (tartrazine).
- Red No. 40 (allura red).
- Blue No.1 (brilliant blue).
- Red No.3 (carmoisine).
- Sodium benzoate.

Red No. 40 is the most widely used dye in America, followed by Yellow No. 5, but many other dyes and additives are found in visibly processed foods. Candy, fruit drinks, sports drinks, popsicles, cookies and sugary cereals are the main offenders, but sodium benzoate is a principal preservative in all kinds of sour foods, including pickles, citrus-flavored products and sour candy. Avoiding all processed foods would erase the danger of additive-induced problems, but if not possible, learn how to be diligent with your choices.

How to Use an Elimination Diet for ADHD

Yellow No. 5 has been studied on its own, and the results do indicate a link to hyperactive behavior. However, most dyes and additives are merely suspect when it comes to ADHD because they’ve only been analyzed in combination with each other. To determine which of the other additives may have negative effects on behavior, you’ll need to use an elimination diet and your powers of deduction.

Many people have been able to pinpoint food allergies or sensitivities by eliminating suspicious foods for a certain amount of time (usually several weeks), and then reintroducing the foods one at a time. As you add each product

back into your regular diet, you'll notice which ones affect behavior and physical well-being. Once you've narrowed down your list of suspects, you'll go through the process again to make sure your dietary conclusions are accurate.

Get Good at Reading Labels

When you have a clear picture of how additives influence ADHD symptoms, you'll have to shop more carefully. Get in the habit of reading nutrition labels: the FDA requires that Yellow No. 5 be clearly labeled on food packaging, but other additives might not be so clearly advertised. Keep a list of the technical terms and the more common names of the major additives with you so you can refer to them before putting any product in your shopping cart.

Whether or not food additives aggravate your child's ADHD symptoms, it's a good idea to replace processed foods with wholesome food wherever possible for stronger immunity and healthy growth.