

HEALTHY CHOICES

Latest tips on the art of living well.

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Nutritional support For happy, balanced children



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Childhood is a happy, carefree time but not all children are full of joy – some suffer from changeable moods, spells of high and low energy and are easily distracted.

This picture – a challenge to parents – can affect children of any age but commonly takes hold at around 3 years of age. Boys are more frequently affected than girls.

Here are some steps you can take towards your child's happiness:

A healthy diet

Make sure your child is eating plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and enough protein. Fish can be particularly important as it contains valuable Essential Fatty Acids called Omega-3 fats. Other important nutrients include iron (found in meat), zinc, magnesium, copper and B group vitamins.

If you can, buy (or grow) organic food – this will minimise the number of chemicals your child comes into contact with. If you purchase non-organic fruit/vegetables, soak them in a sink full of water with a few tablespoons of vinegar (any will do) for a few minutes, then rinse them. The vinegar helps to remove pesticide residues that may be present.

Try to ensure your child avoids sugar and food additives as much as possible, this means reducing processed food, junk food, fizzy drinks and many pre-packaged foods. It will be very important that you read and understand food labels – sometimes chemical names or numbers are used which can be confusing if you don't know which ones to look out for. You may wish to purchase or borrow from the library one of the many books on food additives such as "The New Additive Codebreaker" by Maurice Hanssen.

Foods such as wheat, gluten, soy, corn, dairy, shellfish, nuts, sucrose (sugar) and food additives such as artificial preservatives, colours, flavours and sweeteners have been found to affect children's wellbeing. These may not necessarily present as a full blown allergic

reaction but if your child is sensitive, they can cause problems.

You can test for food intolerances by removing one group (e.g. wheat) from your child's diet for a few weeks, if you don't observe any radical changes re-introduce the group back into their diet and see if any symptoms worsen. Continue this with each of the major allergy groups listed above.

Heavy metal and environmental toxicity

With our modern commercial lifestyles, it is getting increasingly difficult to avoid environmental toxins. Exposure to heavy metals and environmental toxins such as pesticides and cigarette smoke during pregnancy or early childhood may impact neurological development.

Increased levels of heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead have been found in some children.

A good way to test for heavy metals is by a hair tissue analysis as this shows what has been stored in the body. Natural health practitioners e.g. naturopaths, herbalists and nutritionists are able to organise these tests for you.

Other factors

If you suspect your child has a condition that doesn't respond to dietary changes, it pays to see a health professional. Some children with a delayed grasp of language may actually have hearing or learning difficulties. Your health professional can help you rule out anything serious.

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