

Research proves the brain functions at higher levels when we avoid “hidden” food allergies & the elimination solution

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Opinion

During graduate school, I frequently used published research based on a groundbreaking brain SPECT imaging founded by a Dr. Daniel Amen. He is a leading pioneer in using natural, brain-oriented treatments including: emotional, behavioral, anxiety, addiction, mood, eating disordered, memory, attention, autism, obsessive compulsive disorder and learning problems. Most recently he has expounded on his research to treat people in feeling better based on dietary needs and elimination diets. He is a highly lauded physician that I have counted on many times writing endless academic papers. I am a believer. So is the Chances are if you are reading this post your already know the symptoms of an allergic reaction but did you know that certain additives and foods can cause behavioral, emotional or learning problems? These are referred to as “hidden” food allergies. I can say with authority that red dye and chocolate cause my son to behave in a manner which I can barely tolerate. I have to withstand the behavior because I am the offender with rewards of chocolate and well, if he is sick as he is right now and I purchased a cough drop with a red dye in it then that is on me.

My son’s case seems extreme but I believe it is more prevalent than people realize. Our food is full of food dyes, artificial sweeteners and many food additives such as MSG. All of these chemicals can cause our body to react in less than pleasant ways. As far as food allergies are concerned the most common allergens are: peanuts, shellfish, fish, tree nuts, milk, soy, eggs and wheat... and soon sesame. My son also has allergies to beans (severe), seeds, rye, mango (severe), pitted fruits (severe), tomatoes, pork beef and barley. Some of my son’s physical symptoms for food *intolerances* that let me know he is experiencing allergies or sensitivities are when dark circles form under his eyes, headaches occur, chronic sinus issues, stomach aches and even red ears. Yes, red ears weird right? His behavioral problems are the inability to concentrate for too long, rapid speech and aggressiveness. I found this out the “fun” way and the only way to control them was to eliminate the culprits.

“In a 2008 study from Holland, researchers found that putting children with ADD on a restricted elimination diet reduced their symptoms by more than 50 percent in 73 percent of children. This is basically the same effectiveness as prescription ADD medication without any of the side effects” (2016, The Daniel Plan). The children were put on a strict diet eliminating the need for ADD/ADHD medications that personally, I would never give to a child.

In 2003, a study was done to determine whether eliminating allergens could affect the functioning of the brain. A SPECT study tested cerebral blood flow in 30 individuals with an intolerance for wheat and wheat products, also known as celiac disease. Half of the individuals followed a gluten-free diet and the other half did not

eliminate gluten from their diet. In addition, 24 healthy people were tested as the control group. What researchers concluded was that the individuals who followed the gluten free diet experienced decreased cerebral blood flow than the individuals who continued to eat gluten. Seven percent of the patients who had eliminated the gluten from their diet had lower levels of blood flow in at least one quadrant of the brain. This proves that the foods you ingest do indeed affect the functioning of your brain; your brain functions better when it is not exposed to allergens! For instance, when Dr. Amen works with children who have autism or Asperger’s Syndrome he will eliminate gluten from their diet as well as casein. He observed that many of their behavioral problems diminished and their communication/language improved.

What does this research mean? Many individuals with behavioral, emotional and learning problems improve when they eliminate foods and additives in their diets that cause harm. For food allergy children, they may experience more issues if they have “mild” intolerances to some foods. For example, if your allergist says, “yes, he tested positive for tomatoes, but if it isn’t bothering him don’t eliminate it”. I disagree, perhaps it does cause behavioral, emotional and learning issues and I will eliminate it from his diet thank you very much.¹

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Conflicts of interest

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References

1. Amen DG. Food Allergies Effects, Symptoms. 2013.