

Is your autistic or ADHD child on a gluten free diet?

Gluten free diets are very popular among alternative treatments to Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Autism Syndrome includes disorders such as ADHD, Aspergers, Turret's, and Autism. The concept is that an inflammatory response to gluten is causing or contribution to the child's Autism Spectrum Disorder symptoms. Anecdotally we all know of children that have improved on the gluten free diet. However some have and some have not. The scientific literature does not support these diets.

Here is a 2008 review of the diet.

BACKGROUND: It has been suggested that peptides from gluten and casein may have a role in the origins of autism and that the physiology and psychology of autism might be explained by excessive opioid activity linked to these peptides. Research has reported abnormal levels of peptides in the urine and cerebrospinal fluid of people with autism.

OBJECTIVES: To determine the efficacy of gluten and/or casein free diets as an intervention to improve behaviors, cognitive and social functioning in individuals with autism.

SEARCH STRATEGY: The following electronic databases were searched: CENTRAL(The Cochrane Library Issue 2, 2007), MEDLINE (1966 to April 2007), PsycINFO (1971 to April 2007), EMBASE (1974 to April 2007), CINAHL (1982 to April 2007), ERIC (1965 to 2007), LILACS (1982 to April 2007), and the National Research register 2007 (Issue1). Review bibliographies were also examined to identify potential trials.

SELECTION CRITERIA: All randomized controlled trials (RCT) involving programs which eliminated gluten, casein or both gluten and casein from the diets of individuals diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS: Abstracts of studies identified in searches of electronic databases were assessed to determine inclusion by two independent authors the included trials did not share common outcome measures and therefore no meta-analysis was possible. Data are presented in narrative form.

MAIN RESULTS: Two small RCTs were identified (n = 35). No meta-analysis was possible. There were only three significant treatment effects in favor of the diet intervention: overall autistic traits, mean difference (MD) = -5.60 (95% CI -9.02 to -2.18), z = 3.21, p=0.001 (Knivsberg 2002) ; social isolation, MD = -3.20 (95% CI -5.20 to 1.20), z = 3.14, p = 0.002) and overall ability to communicate and interact, MD = 1.70 (95% CI 0.50 to 2.90), z = 2.77, p = 0.006) (Knivsberg 2003). In addition three outcomes showed no significant difference between the treatment and control group and we were unable to calculate mean differences for ten outcomes because the data were skewed. No outcomes were reported for disbenefits including harms.

AUTHORS' CONCLUSIONS: Research has shown of high rates of use of complementary and alternative therapies (CAM) for children with autism including gluten and/or casein exclusion diets. Current evidence for efficacy of these diets is poor. Large scale, good quality randomized controlled trials are needed.

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The answer to why the diet helps some and not others is simple but may not be obvious to someone with an emotional stake in the situation. Simply, some children have an inflammatory issue and others do not. Thankfully there are simple tests which can be performed to see if gluten is an issue for your child. There is a test for **antigliadin** antibodies (**gliadin form of gluten**). The child can also be tested for the **HLA-DQ** gene which is associated with gluten sensitivity. These are usually simple blood test. Lets be specific with these multifactoral Autism Spectrum Disorders. This will increase our chance for success and not put our children and possible there siblings (if you put everyone on the diet so little Johnnie doesn't feel different) through any unnecessary stress and lets direct our effects in a more specific and hopefully effective manner.

Dr. Mane offers one on one consultation as well as Group Seminars for parents and children who suffer from Autism Spectrum Disorders. If you are interested in scheduling a consultation or to attend a seminar please call 813-935-4744.

For more information about Dr. Nelson Mane, D.C. and his treatment approach for ASD go to <http://www.manecenter.com/ADHD.htm>.