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ADDitives and ADHD: A Comprehensive Look

by Stephanie Whited

(NewsTarget) ADHD has been a hot topic in the media for a few years due to raising diagnoses, medication concerns, and debates to whether it is even a real health condition. New research has found that a few food additives can cause the symptoms that can lead to a diagnosis of ADHD. Once we establish the symptoms of ADHD, we can correlate them with the symptoms produced in the study by specific ingredients that we can then identify and eliminate from our families' diets.

What is ADHD?

It is a common group of symptoms that mean a child is having problems learning, socializing, and focusing. Parents and teachers complain of inattention, [hyperactivity](#), and impulsivity, and less emphasis has been placed on what it must feel like to have the symptoms- to not be able to control one's self, play with other children, and please caring adults. Let's call ADHD and its set of symptoms an unsolved problem. This problem is really about the quality and richness of life in a growing child; how can the quality of life of children with this problem be improved? A very simple answer, though it may not prove to be the only answer, has been found. Research has recently found that some ingredients in common foods, when ingested, inhibit children to flourish and grow to the full extent of their capabilities. It is daunting to find how easy it is to buy and consume products that are unsafe, but there is healthy nutrition available, and because these ingredients have not been banned, it is the consumer's responsibility, our responsibility, to ensure the safety of our families. So one proven answer to the problems ADHD presents is to eliminate artificial preservatives and colors from children's [diets](#).

The Study

A study conducted by the UK's government Food Standards Agency (FSA) found a definite link between [food additives](#) and behavior problems in children, such as temper tantrums and poor concentration. Food colorings and one preservative were tested on 3 year olds and 8-9 year olds. The culprits are tartrazine (E102), ponceau 4R (E124), sunset yellow (E110), carmoisine (E122), quinoline yellow (E104), allura red AC (E129), and the preservative [sodium benzoate](#) (E211). When combinations of these ingredients were administered, there was either a significant correlation with decreased attention or a trend towards it. Because the ingredients were all used together, it is not possible to say if it was one or all of the ingredients that played a significant role in changing the children's behavior.

Can we generalize?

Until further research is done, the safety of other additives is unknown, and it is left to the [parents](#) to decide if this is significant enough to generalize to all artificial ingredients. This is not the only study to find artificial colors harmful. [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) concluded that the coloring Red 2G (E120), found in some breakfast sausages and burger meat, may cause cancer in animals and humans, so the evidence against these additives is, well, adding up. Several doctors from leading universities in the U.S. were convinced enough as early as 1999 to write letters to the Department of Health and Human Services asking for further investigation into the effect of additives and food on behavior. See the letters [here](#).

Where else are these ingredients found?

An extremely bright, unnatural color is a good indication of food coloring like in Lifesavers and Jelly Beans. Most candies, though they may boast to be low calorie and/or fat free, probably include [artificial colors](#); the consumer must check the label. Organic alternatives without artificial ingredients have emerged such as organic lollipops from [Yummy Earth](#) and several other types of candies at [College Farm Organic](#) and [Newman's Own Organics](#).

Sodium Benzoate is most often found in [soft drinks](#) but can also be found in many other foods for preservation like condiments and pickles. Sodium benzoate is also used as an anti-icing fluid in automobiles and has previously been found to become [carcinogenic when mixed with the additive Vitamin C and has changed the DNA of mitochondrial yeast cells in the laboratory](#). Sodas were not explicitly used in the new research, but there are many reasons not to drink [soda](#), one being that it "[dissolves away your skeletal system](#)." Previous studies found a strong link between children's consumption of soft drinks and "[behavioral difficulties, hyperactivity, mental distress and overall mental health problems](#)."

If it is hard to believe additives in food could have caused present symptoms, it is now undeniable that additives can spontaneously create problems or exacerbate existing ones. Higher incidences of behavior problems and neurological disorders have also been associated with [vaccinations](#).

If you notice behavior problems emerging in your child, there are safe treatments for him/her without using [medications](#). Proven help in addition to eliminating artificial ingredients in diet include supplementing with [zinc](#) and [omega-3's](#). Parents also have options in behavioral therapy.

The new evidence is compelling to suggest additives can cause behavior problems, but the argument can be made that children are born with behavior problems. While some symptoms may essentially be a part of a child's [DNA](#), it may also be a possibility that toxins from the parents played a part in creating the problems before birth. The [Environmental Working Group](#) found 287 chemicals in newborn babies from their parents and the environment. Could these be contributing to health and attention problems? Could it also be possible that food additives eaten by the parents, especially by the mother during pregnancy, are determining the child's temperament before birth? There is a huge gap open for further research, and in the meantime, consumers must be conscious of their choices for themselves and their children, born and unborn.

About the author

Stephanie Whited is an independent researcher dedicated to spreading awareness about health news, proven alternative treatments, and unsafe mainstream products.