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Work Well . Eat Well . Learn Well . Live Well

What's all the fuss with Food Additives?

According to Additive Alert we are unwittingly consuming 5kg of food additives each year and there is a growing number of chemicals put into everyday foods and drinks that may cause temper tantrums, sleep disturbance and disruptive behaviour, irritability, fatigue, anxiety or aggression in sensitive children and adults.

We are seeing a worrying trend of 'everyday' foods containing food additives that may cause (amongst other things) a disruption in neuron function or hormone levels, leading to hyperactivity, inattentiveness and poor concentration. What we often forget is our brain is our greatest asset! There is a lot that we don't know about the long term and combined effects that additives could have on our health – but what we do know is worth considering. While it is still seen as controversial, the evidence base (from Universities and anecdotally from mums) is growing. It consistently shows food may affect hyperactivity, irritability, restlessness, inattention and quality of sleep.

According to Sue Dengate (Author of Fed Up) The main behavioural effects of food additives are irritability, temper outbursts, oppositional defiance, restlessness and difficulty falling asleep. Other effects can include speech delay, mood swings, head banging, fighting with siblings, making silly noises, anxiety, depression or difficulty concentrating. Effects on health can include eczema and other itchy skin rashes, bedwetting, stomach aches, sneaky poos, constipation, frequent colds, flu or infections, headaches, migraines or asthma. Given Australia has one of the world's highest rates of asthma it is worth considering additives. Sulphite preservatives (220-228) in foods such as dried fruits, sausages, cordials and some fruit drinks, can cause irritable airways with no obvious symptoms until children encounter an asthma trigger such as cold air or a virus.

Educating ourselves to know which ones we/ children might be sensitive to and are worth avoiding is essential if we want a happy and calm household. The "easy" lunch choices you are making could be making your life HARDER in the long run. Learning about additives makes it easier as you're clearer about what you're buying.

Benefits of reducing additives for adults

According to the *Chemical Journal of Toxicology*, there are 31 potential estrogen-mimicking food additives that may be linked to health effects. It has been suggested that toxins can't be broken down and eliminated because certain food additives may interrupt the synthesis of specific detoxifying enzymes. A number of food additives may also cause problems such as asthma, hay fever, eczema, hives, headaches and nausea in sensitive individuals.

According to the Feingold Association in the US, a diet free from artificial food colourings and other food additives may help prevent destructive or abusive behaviour, aggression, compulsive tendencies, frustration, irritability, nervousness, mood swings and depression.

Benefits of reducing the additives for children

Everyday kids across Australia are consuming lunchboxes brimming with foods containing food additives that have the potential to cause hyperactivity in children. Ask any veteran teacher about the changes they have seen and more often than not they cite an increase in behavioural difficulties and an increase in ADHD diagnosis amongst their students.

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Schools in the UK have also taken steps to ban additives from its meals to address classroom behaviour. Staff from a school in Worcestershire started the trial after discovering a study showing one in four children have tantrums as a result of eating too many additives. They banned 27 additives – including the yellow colouring in custard – during a two week trial. After two weeks staff noticed an improvement in pupils' behaviour and concentration levels. More than 30% of parents noticed their children were better behaved during the trial and 18% said their children were sleeping better.

In 1986 a trial of a low additive policy for school breakfasts and lunches in 803 schools in New York was associated with a nearly 16% increase in academic ranking compared to the rest of the nation's schools. The biggest difference was seen in children identified as 'learning disabled'.

As a result of research conducted in the UK, products sold in the European Union with certain artificial colours need to carry a warning on food labels, stating the item 'may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children'.

It's more important than ever to know what you need to avoid.

The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Allergy Unit identified 50 problem-causing food additives that cause reactions in children such as behaviour, asthma, eczema, irritable bowel symptoms, migraine and depression. They found the food intolerance symptoms improved when certain additives have been eliminated from the diet.

The good news is you don't need to be chained to the kitchen and make everything from scratch. The key is to know which additives you need to avoid and why. You DON'T have to avoid everything with a 'number', because not all food additives cause problems! If you have the time and can get the kids involved making lunch box items from scratch - brilliant. As a home economist I know that this isn't always possible! Many families are just so busy and time poor they rely on packaged foods to help make life a little easier. The key is to know which additives you need to avoid and why!

This list from **Additive Alert: Your Guide to Safer Shopping** includes a number of the additives that people who might be sensitive to additives, might want to avoid based on the health, learning and behaviour problems some people experience. If you have asthma or other specific health concerns, or if you have young children, there may be other additives you wish to include on your list.

Colours: 102 (Tartrazine), 104 (Quinoline Yellow), 110 (Sunset Yellow FCF), 122 (Azorubine or Carmosine), 123 (Amaranth), 124 (Ponceau 4R), 127 (Erythrosine), 129 (Allura Red AC), 132 (Indigotine), 133 (Brilliant Blue), 142 (Green S), 151 (Brilliant Black), 153 (Carbon Black), 155 (Brown HT), 160b (Annatto), 173 (Aluminium), 174 (Silver), 175 (Gold)

Preservatives: 211 (Sodium Benzoate), 212 (Potassium Benzoate), 213 (Calcium Benzoate), 216 (Propylparaben), 218 (Methylparaben), 249 (Potassium Nitrite), 250 (Sodium Nitrite), 251 (Sodium Nitrate), 280 (Propionic Acid), 281 (Sodium Propionate), 282 (Calcium Propionate)

Antioxidants: 310 (Propyl gallate), 311 (Octyl gallate), 312 (Dodecyl gallate), 319 (Tert-Butylhydroquinone TBHQ), 320 (Butylated hydroxyanisole BHA), 321 (Butylated hydroxytoluene BHT)

Gums: 407 (Carrageenan), 407A Processed eucheuma seaweed, 466 (Sodium carboxymethylcellulose)

Flavour enhancer: 621 (Monosodium L-glutamate MSG), 627 (Disodium 5'-guanylate), 631 (Disodium 5'-inosinate), 635 (Disodium 5'-ribonucleotides), 637 (Ethyl maltol)

Others: 900 (Polydimethylsiloxane), 914 (oxidized polyethylene), 943 (a-butane, b-isobutane), 944 (propane), 950 (Acesulphame potassium), 951 (Aspartame), 952 (Calcium cyclamate, sodium cyclamate), 954 (saccharin or calcium/sodium/potassium saccharin), 955 (sucralose), 1201 (polyvinylpyrrolidone), 1520 (Propylene glycol), 1521 (polyethylene glycol 8000).

In the back of the book **Additive Alert: Your Guide to Safer Shopping** you will be able to use the tables in Appendix 1 to work out which additives you may like to avoid for specific health/ behaviour issues.

{Where do I Start???

Start your journey just by looking at **one product a week**. It's about making better choices even when you're too busy to eat well!

1. Know **your reason**: Decide which additives you want to avoid - back of book. Think critically about what we eat!
2. Identify **obstacles** (what will stop you in your tracks)
3. Get your **pantry organised**:
 - ☐ Look at 1 - 2 staples a week. ONLY 1-2! Pick the foods you eat the most (bread, juice, biscuits, lunch items) . See which contain additives you want to avoid. Look for alternatives just for those FIRST.
 - ☐ Repeat this process over 5 - 6 weeks
4. Master **Meal Planning** with Creative Cooking shortcuts
 - ☐ Recipes with little to no additives in under 30 minutes
 - ☐ Guide: Too Busy to Eat Well <http://www.mealplanningyourway.com/shop/>

{Lunch and Snack Options}

1. Choose better breakfast options to set you up well for a day of thinking and working! Remember your brain is your best asset! Choose better quality foods for breakfast and include protein
2. See each and every meal as an opportunity to eat more nutrient dense foods.
 - Increase your vegetable intake
 - Use herbs and spices to add flavour
3. Always choose low additive options

Option	Comments
Snacks	Always choose fresh vegetables, and fruit. Go organic where and when you can. Many savoury snacks contain 621 (MSG and mates – as per the Additive Alert card) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Watch out for colours – artificial and natural colours with potential hyperactive/hypersensitive reactions in certain individuals (160b Annatto; 120 Carmines)<input type="checkbox"/> Start by choosing the plain options and PLEASE read the label
Dried fruit	Always choose options without preservatives by reading the label Go for organic dried fruit
Drinks	Choose plain water. Watch for artificial colours and 160b in flavoured milks and artificial sweeteners in diet drinks, plus soft drinks may have preservatives, especially 211 – Sodium Benzoate – hyperactivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Always choose options without preservatives by reading the label<input type="checkbox"/> Plain Soda Water, plain mineral water
Bread/ Wraps	Avoid 282 and watch for antioxidants (319 and 320) Look for food variety – so gluten free options/ grain free options are a great idea – or eat a salad instead!
Sandwich fillings	Avoid processed cheese as often contains 160b - Choose real cheese slices Go for food variety – not just preservative free ham! (e.g. salmon/ tuna/ eggs/ salad and cheese/ chicken).

Need some help now you're additive alert?

Contact Home Economist and Additive Alert Community Talks Presenter Louise D'Allura on 0408 723 559 or via louise@MealPlanningYourWay.com.

Grab the **Additive Alert App**, the **Book Additive Alert** (\$20) or join the **Online Course Meal Planning for Low Additive Eating** (\$19.95)

Resources:

Australia: Additive Alert App

This simple mobile app allows you to search for Australian and New Zealand food additives – by number AND name! The additive data has been compiled from Additive Alert: Your Guide to Safer Shopping written by Julie Eady. It is such a great resource to compliment to the book. Get the App from these locations

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.additivealert&hl=en>

iPhone: <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/additive-alert/id642081101?mt=8>

(NOTE – if it doesn't appear on iTunes – it is still being updated!)

Additive Alert: Your Guide to Safer Shopping (Book)

Grab a copy of the book Additive Alert (\$20 plus \$5 postage) by visiting www.MealPlanningYourWay.com/shop

Meal Planning for Low Additive Eating (Online Course)

It's the next step you need after attending a Food Additives Talk. Delivered over 5 weeks, the course comes with Videos, Guides + Product Swaps Lists. All this for \$19.95! visit www.MealPlanningYourWay.com/shop

