

Pure Facts

Newsletter of the Feingold® Associations of the United States



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Can Sugar Cause Hyperactivity?

"My little boy became hyperactive after eating a candy bar," the father wrote to a psychologist whose syndicated column appears in many newspapers.

The columnist's response was that "recent studies indicate sugar doesn't cause hyperactivity". This reflects the common misconception that a candy bar and sugar are the same.

"Candy" and "Sugar"

In our culture, these two words are frequently used interchangeably, but there is an enormous difference between them.

While sugar is a fairly simple substance, candy is generally composed of many compounds, both natural and synthetic. In addition to sugar, some candies contain synthetic dyes, artificial flavorings and one or more of the antioxidant preservatives eliminated by the Feingold Program. Glazes, gums, emulsifiers, etc. are often used as well.

To equate "sugar" with "candy" is like saying a string bean is the same as vegetable soup.

Studies on sugar and hyperactivity

The double blind British study by Egger et al indicated that only 16% of the hyperactive children tested reacted to sugar. In addition, the parents of several other children in the study felt their child reacted to sugar when he ate a great deal of it. The experience of Feingold volunteers supports these findings. A few children are very sensitive to sugar and/or other sweeteners, but most can tolerate them in moderation. When



too much sweetener is consumed the parents report their child's behavior changes for the worse.

A study conducted at Children's Hospital in Washington, DC supported another Feingold observation — sugars seem to be tolerated by most children if they are eaten after a nourishing meal.

Some studies claim to demonstrate that there is no link at all between sugar and hyperactive behavior. One which is widely quoted was conducted by Mark L. Wolraich et al at the University of Iowa. (Funding was provided by the Sugar Associates, Inc., and the National Institutes of Health.)

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Mother: "Guilty as Charged"

Mother's Day...sentimental...nostalgic. This is the time for presents and thanks — unless you're the mother of a hyperactive child.

Jacob and Jason are not twins, not even related. But their moms are both veterans of the guilt trip which goes along with being the parent of a child with behavior or learning problems. Both boys have younger brothers with none of the same symptoms, but somehow this is forgotten while Mom's "shortcomings" are inspected. One more similarity -- both women are fantastic Feingold volunteers who have helped more families than they can possibly remember.

Jacob

"All babies take naps," my mother-in-law explained as I desperately tried to deal with my difficult first-born. "If he doesn't take a nap it's your fault."

Jacob never walked. He just got up and ran. Sherry Lebowitz thought she was seeing the terrible twos, but it didn't show any signs of stopping.

Before she went for counseling a teacher friend had warned her, "I want you to know, going in, that they're going to blame you as a mother. They have no one else to blame; the child's only three years old." Sure enough, Sherry had harmed him, the counselor decided. She had traumatized her son by going back to work.

She took Jacob in for an evaluation when he was four. "It's sad how quickly they make a judgement. They observed him for ten minutes and slapped the label 'hyperactive' on him."

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The Feingold® Associations of the United States, Inc., founded in 1976, are non-profit volunteer organizations whose purposes are to support their members in the implementation of the Feingold Program and to generate public awareness of the potential role of foods and synthetic additives in behavior, learning and health problems. The program is based on a diet eliminating synthetic colors, synthetic flavors, and the preservatives BHA, BHT, and TBHQ.

Special Issue on Sugars

Guilt, from page 1

That was a label Sherry found hard to understand. Her son had a long attention span and played well by himself; it was the stress of a group that triggered the behavior problems.

At four and a half, Jacob tested out to be very bright, with a great vocabulary, but he had poor motor skills. A string of advisors contributed to Sherry's rapidly diminishing self-esteem. "He is environmentally hyperactive, caused by his home life." (There was one counselor who didn't seem to join the chorus of accusers. But then, he didn't have much insight either. A long-haired hippie-type, his contributions were, "Oh, wow!", "Gee", "Man", and "Wow".)

"I gave him Ritalin and, unlike most children, it increased his appetite." Sherry found the medication also drastically increased Jacob's activity level ("about ten-fold"). "He went berserk! From the time he came home from school, he ate, jumped from one piece of furniture to another, and talked constantly until 10 pm. "I called the doctor and asked him, 'What do we do now?' His



Jacob

response: 'Call me next week and we'll talk.'"

When her son was five Sherry learned about the Feingold diet, and the change in Jacob has been remarkable. Today, at age 7 1/2, the child who had had very poor motor skills ("He tripped on air.") is above average athletically and receives a "B" in physical education -- and "A's" in the rest of his subjects.

What does Sherry's mother-in-law say about the change in her grandson? "She thinks he's perfect and has always thought so," Sherry told *Pure Facts*. "The woman is 80 years old and not about to find a flaw in the little boy who bears the name of her late husband. She just figures I was a 'hysterical

mother.' Actually, before we got Jacob on the diet, I think I was!"

Jason

"I think you're being very unfair to Jason." The learning disabilities specialist made Suzanne Crossley feel guilty for not wanting to put her son on Ritalin. Although he had been on the Feingold Program for several years, and had improved dramatically, the teacher was dissatisfied with Jason's school performance.

After conducting neurological testing, the doctor felt there was no serious problem. Jason had a mild learning disability, but nothing requiring a recourse to drugs.

She thoroughly disliked the idea, but Suzanne finally agreed to try Ritalin in the event it could help Jason with his schoolwork.

"I gave him one (10 mg) pill, and within 45 minutes his activity level increased noticeably. He was playing with his younger brother and I saw Jason pick up a toy gun. Aiming the gun at his brother, he said, 'If this was real I'd blow your head off.'"

Jason's reaction to one Ritalin was severe.

"This sort of behavior was completely out of character for Jason and of course it frightened me. Then he held his hand to the back of his head and began screaming in pain. He said his head was 'exploding'. This, too, was something Jason had never done.

"Amid the screaming, I called the doctor and told him what had happened. (He could hear it for himself!) He asked me how many of the Ritalin I had given Jason, and when I told him "only one" he told me to "throw the damn things away and tell the school you tried."

It's been four years since this episode and Jason gets along very well with his current teacher. They have a lot in common because his 6th grade teacher is on the Feingold diet too!"

Sugar, from page 1

Feingold members will readily see some of the serious flaws in the design of this study:

- The hyperactive children being tested were taken off behavior-modifying drugs only 24 hours before the beginning of the study. (Dr. Feingold observed that it can take as long as 30-40 days for a child to be free of the effects of the drugs.)
- The control drinks were sweetened with aspartame (NutraSweet) which has been linked with neurological disorders, and could affect behavior. (See *Pure Facts* for December 1987/January 1988.)
- The drink given to the subjects was KOOL AID, containing two of the additives found by Feingold members to be capable of triggering severe behavioral reactions: synthetic dyes and artificial flavorings.

A study conducted at the National Institutes of Mental Health, using "lemon flavored" drinks, sweetened with saccharine made similar mistakes. In the NIMH study, the children were taken off medication one week prior to the start of the study.

A FDA task force report on sugar gained wide publicity last year. After reviewing more than 1,000 papers on the health effects of sugar, the scientists concluded that sugar did not appear to be a cause of hyperactivity.

The sugar industry fights back

News of the FDA conclusion was greeted joyfully by the Sugar Association, whose president, J.R. O'Connell, had earlier vowed to battle the foes of nutritive sweeteners (sugar).

Addressing an industry gathering in February of 1982, O'Connell said, "...we have been the symbolic whipping boy in an ongoing widespread nutritional scandal that will be remembered by sociologists as the low-point in consumer exploitation."

What Dr. Feingold recommended

Dr. Feingold noted: "The quantity of any sugar that causes hyperactivity will vary from child to child." He advised parents to keep a diet diary to determine their child's tolerance. He also recommended parents avoid

giving sugars on an empty stomach when they are more rapidly absorbed.

He did not single out any type of sweetener (such as honey, fructose, raw sugar, maple syrup, etc.) as more desirable than another, and believed that most people consume too many of these.

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Happy Birthdays

Q: My daughter is doing well on the diet. But how do I deal with birthday parties?

A: Whose birthday party? If it's your child's party, you have control of what food is served, and it's easy to avoid the prohibited additives. See page 32 of the *Feingold Handbook* for suggestions.

If the party is to be held at a friend's home, check with the parents to determine what will be served. Here are some suggestions which may be helpful, especially if you don't know the other child's family:

- Explain that your child is sensitive to some food additives. You may feel more comfortable saying she's "allergic to food coloring, etc." (Even though the problem is generally a sensitivity, not a true allergy, most people understand allergies. See the April issue of *Pure Facts* for details on the difference.)
- If ice cream and soda will be served mention some of the acceptable brands your child can eat. If the hostess doesn't seem interested in switching brands ask if your child can have milk,



water, or juice in place of an artificially colored/flavored punch. Or, she can take her own can or soda, boxed juice, or natural fruit drink.

- You may want to supply a cupcake or piece of her favorite cake. If your daughter is new to the diet, she should avoid all bakery cakes. Children who have been on the program for several years can often tolerate an occasional infraction.
- Many birthday parties include stops at fast food restaurants. Refer to the May 1987 issue of *Pure Facts*, containing a guide to fast foods which may be tolerated by Feingold members.

When the party's at your house and the other parents arrive to pick up their children, invite them in; don't be surprised if they comment on how unusually calm everyone is.

Feingold Look-Alikes

Orange Julia



Named after the popular orange drink (not after Julia Child) this Stage II refresher can just as easily be changed to a Stage I drink by replacing the orange juice concentrate with pineapple juice concentrate.

1/2 of a 6 ounce container of frozen orange juice concentrate (1/3 cup)

1/2 cup milk

1/2 cup water

1/4 cup sugar

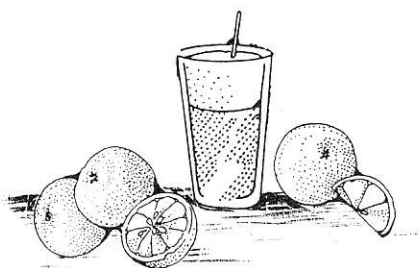
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla

5 - 6 ice cubes

1. Combine all ingredients in a blender.

2. Blend for about 30 seconds until smooth.

3. Serve immediately. Makes 3 cups (24 ounces).



John Naisbitt, the author of *Megatrends*, believes that concerns on the part of the public about food additives and the desire on the part of manufacturers to increase the use of food additives is shaping up to be one of the most important trends as we approach the 21st century.

Reprinted from Allergy Quarterly published by the Allergy Information Association

Editorial Comment

When the Sugar Association president called his product a "symbolic whipping boy" he was right on target.

There is a widespread belief among consumers that sweeteners such as honey and fructose are more desirable than sucrose ("table sugar"). Another common misunderstanding is that sugar is the major factor in triggering hyperactivity and that the Feingold Program eliminates sugar.

The industry's lobby should be hard at work clarifying these issues, but instead, they are perpetuating the problem.

Literature provided by the Sugar Association notes that Dr. Feingold did not eliminate sugar from the diets of the hyperactive children he treated. But they shoot themselves in the foot by referring to the connection between diet and behavior as a myth.

The industry's efforts have been counter-productive.

The poorly designed studies using Kool Aid, NutraSweet and saccharine will not take the heat off sugar; but those studies which connect synthetic additives and hyperactivity could.

Pronouncements from the FDA, the Sugar Association, or countless industry consultants will not change what parents and teachers witness - that some children go wild after consuming candy bars, cookies, sodas, etc. Since the most noticable common denominator in these foods is sugar, it receives all the blame.

But foods high in sugar generally contain synthetic colors and/or flavors - particularly vanillin (artificial vanilla).

At the same time, manufacturers who wish to appeal to nutrition-conscious consumers by sweetening candies and cookies with honey generally avoid synthetic colors/flavors.

The sugar industry could accomplish far more by encouraging food manufacturers to remove unnecessary synthetic additives than by funding another poorly designed study.

The Feingold Associations do not endorse, approve or assume responsibility for any product, brand, method or treatment. The presence (or absence) of a product on a Feingold foodlist, or the discussion of a method or treatment does not constitute approval (or disapproval). The foodlists are based primarily upon information supplied by manufacturers, and are not based upon independent testing.

Sugar, from page 2

The Many different sugars

Not only does the quantity of sugars tolerated vary from one Feingold member to the next, the type of sugars vary as well. Many successfully use white granulated or confectioner's sugar, while others do best with honey. The salicylate-sensitive member may be likely to have problems with one or more varieties of honey.

Corn sweeteners and corn syrup are widely used in foods because they are less expensive than sugar. Unfortunately, they cause problems for many Feingold members, especially those who are new to the Program. Since these people can generally tolerate corn in other forms, it is not believed to be an allergic reaction.

Food chemists are working on the development of several new synthetic sweeteners: acesulfame K, sucralose, alitame and Lactitol. Abbott Laboratories, which manufactures cyclamate, has petitioned the Food & Drug Administration to allow them to once again market this sweetener. Cyclamate was banned in 1970 after tests showed a mixture of cyclamate and saccharine caused cancer in laboratory animals.

Dr. Feingold felt that in the absence of studies which could demonstrate the safety of synthetic sweeteners, chemically-sensitive individuals should avoid them.

Pure Facts

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Sugar Takes the Blame

The following letter, sent by a mother in Alabama, is fairly typical of the mail we receive:

*Dear Sirs,
I am desperate. I hope and pray you can help me....*

My three year old daughter seems to have a reaction to sugar. We try very hard to keep her on sugar-free products, but it is difficult. It not only makes her hyperactive, it changes her personality completely. She is like two different people when she gets too much sugar. It even affects her sleep.

Doctors disagree with me. They say foods or sugar can't cause this. But I can see it with my own eyes.



Poster Contest

Once again the Association will sponsor a poster contest for our children and teens.

The posters will be displayed at our Conference (to be held in the San Jose, California area June 22 - 26), but families need not be present to participate. Every child who submits a poster will receive an award, and the posters will be judged during the conference to select those to receive special recognition.

"How I felt before and after I went on the Feingold diet" will again be the topic. Please use an 8 1/2 x 11-inch sheet of unlined paper. Each poster should have the child's name, address, phone number, and age on the back.

Thanks to the Feingold Association of the Northeast for offering to coordinate the contest. Please mail your poster to: Feingold Association, 67 Harned Road, Commack, NY 11725

Sugar Coated Advertising

The hotly competitive cereal industry is often a trend-setter for the rest of the food industry. Kellogg's opened the floodgates of health related advertising in 1984 when it printed anti-cancer claims on its boxes of All-Bran.

The following year the cereal giant removed the word "sugar" from its Sugar Frosted Flakes. *Advertising Age*, the advertising industry's trade journal, reasoned, "No need to wave a red flag in the customer's face."

"Can you fool mother?"

At the same time General Foods' Post Super Sugar Crisp became Super Golden Crisp. The company said the change was due to their desire to change to a new gold foil box in honor of the company's introduction of puffed wheat 36 years earlier.

Post ads claimed the cereal is made "just the way Mother Nature intended." *Advertising Age* responded, "Who says you can't fool Mother Nature? The more important question is: Can you fool Mother?"

Nabisco's contribution was a statement on the box front of its 100% Bran cereal: "100% Bran — flavored with two naturally sweet fruit juices." The cereal continued to be 18% sugar, but now contained a fraction of a teaspoon of fruit juice in each serving.

Thanks to You!

The recent increase in the cost of postage will place an added strain on the Association's resources. Membership dues are kept as low as possible, and our work is already carried out almost exclusively by volunteers. This does not leave many areas where we can trim costs.

Your extra contribution when you join the association or renew your membership, and your efforts to designate us as a recipient of your United Way/Combined Federal Campaign contribution are especially appreciated in times like this.

Thanks to you for helping us to do what we like best — helping you!