

Autism & Gluten and Casein Free diet

The Gluten and Casein Free diet theorises that people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or associated conditions will show some improvement on such a diet. One Australian study found that necessary gut bacteria (enterococci faecium) are not present in children with ASD, while another study from the Autism Research Unit at the University of Sunderland explains in the 'Opioid Excess Theory' that there is incomplete breakdown of Gluten and Casein releases peptides which as a result of a 'leaky gut' gets absorbed and crosses the blood-brain barrier into the central nervous system (CNS). This causes disruption of the normal CNS processes affecting cognition, perception, emotions, mood and behaviour. In children with ASD and other associated conditions the gluten and casein is toxic to their systems. This is not an allergy and therefore allergy tests will not show anything. *Indeed, only a proportion of children will show a positive change and therefore not everyone may find it of benefit.*

Gluten can be found in bread, pasta, cereals, flour, pizza bases, cakes and biscuits. It can also be an ingredient in soups, sauces, ready meals and processed foods. Casein is a protein found in milk. Milk is used to many commercial products and therefore reading food labels carefully to check for ingredient is important. Avoid anything that contains milk, skimmed milk, condensed milk, milk solids, casein, whey, whey solids, lactose and caseinate.

What you can eat ?

- All meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, potatoes, rice and lentils.
- Gluten free processed foods
- Bread, flour, pasta, crackers and biscuits Free from Gluten.
- All UK packaged foods are required to have allergen labelling which will tell you if gluten is one of the ingredients.
- Foods that clearly state, '*gluten-free*', '*very low-gluten*', '*suitable for coeliacs*'

Where is the hidden gluten and dairy?

- Modified food starch can be produced from wheat or corn. Contacting the manufacturer to identify the source can be helpful.
- Natural flavourings/Hydrolyzed vegetable protein may contain wheat flour as an ingredient.
- Processed meats e.g. luncheon meats, sausages & frankfurters. An alternative is a good organic butcher who makes their own meats.
- Lactic acid can be produced from sour milk, but also from whey, potatoes, sugar beet, cane, grape sugar, corn, alfalfa and molasses.
- Caramel colouring often contains gluten and casein
- Avoid malt vinegar. Instead use rice, apple, white wine or balsamic vinegar.
- Medication can contain gluten or lactose.

- Many non-food items such as Glue on lickable envelopes and stamps, art supplies such as paints, clay, play dough and glue may contain gluten.

Children starting a dairy and gluten free diet can go through an initial short period of withdrawal as they have a 'addiction' to e.g. bread and milk (gluten and casein products). It takes a minimum of 3 weeks for casein to be eliminated from the body, and 3 months for gluten to be eliminated. Therefore the diet should be tried for a minimum of 3 months to be effective. Changes reported by parents can be; more eye contact, interaction, calmer, talkative, more connected and looking healthier and brighter.

Related Resources:

- Gluten Free Diet
- Dairy Free Diet

Useful Websites:

Many supermarkets offer lists of Gluten and Dairy Free products which are freely available on their websites.

- www.glutenfree-foods.co.uk
- www.glutenfree.com
- www.alotoforganics.co.uk/cats/diet.php
- www.haldanefoods.co.uk/products/dairyfree

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