



AUTISM and the SPECIFIC CARBOHYDRATE DIET
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The Specific Carbohydrate Diet™ was first detailed in the book, Breaking the Vicious Cycle, written by Elaine Gottschall, M.Sc and based on the work of Dr. Elson Haas. Gottschall used the diet, to help her own daughter who was chronically ill with Crohn's disease. The diet was designed for patients with intestinal diseases alone, but has recently come into use by parents of children with autism. Anecdotal reports indicate that some children do very well with this protocol.

The diet is more restrictive than gfcf. It eliminates starches, while allowing some sugars, and consists mainly of meats, poultry, fish, eggs, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds. It is based on the premise that limiting dietary carbohydrates to simple sugars (usually for at least a year) will halt the fermentation of carbohydrate breakdown products in the gut. This will then starve toxic organisms such as bacteria and fungi in the GI tract and restore gut integrity and immune function. The diet begins with a limited number of foods and gradually expands as the intestinal tract heals.

There are a number of reasons this diet makes sense for children with ASD. We know that gluten and casein sensitivity, leaky gut, chronic bowel problems, salicylate intolerance etc are symptoms of a damaged intestinal tract with an overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria or yeast and insufficient desirable flora. Normalization of gut integrity will often result in improvement of these symptoms. Whereas some restricted diets (gfcf, low phenol, allergen free) remove the offending substance, SCD theoretically starves the yeast which causes the susceptibility, and gets to the root of the underlying problem. In addition, when the yeast themselves are starved out direct yeast related problems are removed.

If SCD can heal the gut more effectively and restore the integrity of the intestine, food sensitivities may resolve, allowing for broader food choices down the road. Better restoration if the barrier between the gut and the bloodstream appears to reduce behavioral problems, improve sleep, eye contact and neurologic function in some children.

The major challenges to SCD are the 1) increased food restrictions, 2) need to prepare almost all foods by hand 3) limiting of supplements that contain fillers, binders or other ingredients that are not SCD legal, 4) initial increases in die-off type reactions, 5) controversy over whether dairy (some of which is allowed on SCD) can be introduced in ASD kids.

As with any intervention, this diet does not appear to work, nor is it appropriate for all children. At this time, it appears that those with chronic or unresponsive yeast overgrowth, progressively increasing food sensitivities, and/or extreme bowel inflammation are the best candidates.

The above is intended as information and does not represent the only options addressing this problem. Please contact your primary physician prior to beginning any treatment.