

A Mother's Experience With Artificial Food Colorings

Written by Jenafer Medina

Monday, 01 March 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 16 October 2013 13:33

When I began my family, much planning went into what we ate. I made my children's baby food from scratch, buying high-quality organic fruits and vegetables, free-range meats and organic dairy products. But as our lives changed, our commitment to this diet didn't survive the test of time. It was a bit of a shame, as we had been exclusively organic before moving to a new home. I had even pureed all of my kids' baby foods, and freezing them in ice cube trays for storage.



[Appearing in Issue #25. Order A Copy Today](#)

When my children were three and four years old, I started to loosen up on their diets, mostly while trying to keep myself sane in the process of moving (we found ourselves living in a hotel for two months, then a one-bedroom apartment, then in a new house stacked with boxes). While I didn't give up entirely on nutrition, I did allow some candy every week or so (colorful Skittles were a favorite). I also allowed fast food more often than I liked, since we went without a stove in our new house for weeks.

While we weren't junk food junkies, we had strayed from where we'd been. I had friends who ran the gamut on nutrition beliefs: those who ate only organic, those who let their kids eat anything, and those, like me, who ran in the middle of the road. I'd hide the Skittles from my organic friends and get McDonalds with my no-limitation friends.

A Mother's Experience With Artificial Food Colorings

Written by Jenafer Medina

Monday, 01 March 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 16 October 2013 13:33

It was after our move that someone planted a little bug in my head that artificial food colors were linked to childhood behavioral issues. I researched it. The things I read scared me and changed my ways forever. I started reading correlations between artificial food coloring (AFC) and hyperactive and problematic behavior. This new science resonated with me, as my son, Michael, had begun to become overwhelmed easily, which led to explosive behavior. I was becoming sad over his mood changes because they began to define him, but I knew these moods weren't really who he was. A diet change to help him was worth trying, I thought, and decided to begin by eliminating artificial food colorings. This resulted in chucking a whole bunch of food from my pantry and restocking after reading ingredient labels. To my surprise, I realized that AFCs are in almost everything—even where you don't expect it.

In my research, I found that as far back as the 1970s, Dr. Ben Feingold strongly advocated the link between diet and behavior. His work culminated in a set of dietary guidelines for children suffering from a variety of behavioral issues. Currently, the Center for Science in the Public Interest is following in his footsteps, urging the FDA to eliminate artificial food coloring. "The science shows that kids' behavior improves when these artificial colorings are removed from their diets and worsens when they're added to the their diets," said Dr. David Schab, a psychiatrist at Columbia University Medical Center, who conducted the 2004 meta-analysis with his colleague Dr. Nhi-Ha T. Trinh. "While not all children seem to be sensitive to these chemicals, it's hard to justify their continued use in foods—especially those foods heavily marketed to young children." Similarly, J.M. Swanson and M. Kinsbourne found in their research that food dyes impaired children's abilities on a learning test.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has not acknowledged the link. However, an article in the February 2008 issue of AAP Grand Rounds reviews the evidence and concludes, "parents and providers understandably seek safe and effective interventions [for ADHD] that require no prescription...a trial of a preservativefree, food coloring-free diet is a reasonable intervention." (author's emphasis added)

In my opinion, of course it is reasonable. Why wouldn't the AAP advocate for a dietary change like this before medicating kids with Ritalin and other drugs? I wonder what took them so long to encourage people to at least try something natural before resorting to pharmaceuticals? In my own experiment in our home, I have found dramatic results. While my daughter, Meagan, has no sensitivity to food dyes, Michael is a very dramatic case. I can usually predict his behavioral outbursts almost to the minute, after he has artificial food dyes. Now, after having eliminated AFDs from his diet for three months, the change has been dramatic. He is more even-tempered and more rational when upset. His episodic meltdowns have dramatically decreased, his focus is much clearer and he is more easygoing.

A Mother's Experience With Artificial Food Colorings

Written by Jenafer Medina

Monday, 01 March 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 16 October 2013 13:33

Because of my research and personal experience, I do believe that there are children who have sensitivities to these artificial food additives, and that they can be helped with dietary changes. I encourage all parents to look into this issue, get all of the facts, and make a determination based on your family's unique situation.



This article appeared in [Pathways to Family Wellness](#) magazine, Issue #25.

View [Article References](#)

View [Author Bio](#)

To purchase this issue, [Order Here](#) .