

HYPERACTIVITY AND SUGAR INTAKE

A hyperactive child can be a challenge at times, and different treatments have been tried to help this condition. One of these treatments has been food and diet. At one time it was believed that sugar made hyperactivity worse, but this has been proven not to be true. There is not a special food or diet that will cure hyperactivity, but healthy eating habits can help prevent outbursts and frustration by keeping blood sugar levels stable.

Food is fuel for the body. The food we eat turns into blood sugar, which our body (and especially the brain) uses for energy. Blood sugar levels change based on what and when we eat. When blood sugar is low, the brain is not getting enough fuel. Some symptoms of low blood sugar are irritability, poor concentration, shakiness, nervousness and headache.

The following suggestions will help keep blood sugar levels from going too low:

1. Eat on a regular schedule. Have 3 meals a day, with snacks between meals if there is more than 3-4 hours between meals. Eating on a regular schedule gives your body a steady supply of fuel.
2. Include protein with each meal. Protein-rich foods (such as those in the list below) turn into fuel more slowly than carbohydrate-rich foods. This helps prevent low blood sugar levels between meals. If there is a long time between meals, it may help to include some protein with the snack as well.

Protein-rich foods

(turn into blood sugar slowly;
provide fuel for 3-4 hours)

meat
fish
poultry
cheese
cottage cheese
peanut butter
milk, yogurt
egg

Carbohydrate-rich foods

(turn into blood sugar quickly;
provide fuel for up to 2 hours)

bread
crackers
cereal
bagels, English muffins
fruit and juice
rice, pasta, noodles
potato

If you have any further questions, a Reliant Medical Group Nutrition Education Specialist is available to help: call (508 852-6175, or 1 (888) 392-0183