

Food colouring chemicals make children hyperactive

Some chemicals used to colour food and beverages could make normal kids hyperactive, researchers in Britain have found.

Hyperactivity can be described as a state of over activeness. Strong emotional reactions and a very short attention span are also typical for a hyperactive person.

The researchers tested some common food dyes and preservatives on a group of toddlers and older children over a six-week period and then compared their behaviour using standard tests used to diagnose attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The tests were administered by teachers, psychologists and parents.

The researchers gave two groups of children - one group aged three years and the others aged eight and nine - three sets of drinks. Two of the drinks were cocktails of additives and colourings commonly found in sweets and drinks. The third drink was a placebo - it contained no colourings or additives.

They found that the children who drank the cocktails of additives and colourings were noticeably more hyperactive and had shorter attention spans than those who drank the placebo, reported the online edition of Radio Australia.

Although studies in the past had shown the adverse impact of artificial colouring of foods and beverages on health, the link between hyperactivity and food colouring in otherwise healthy, calm, normal kids hasn't been well demonstrated, the scientists said.

This latest study isn't perfect because it didn't test individual chemicals to see which ones caused the hyperactivity. Also, the kids were given larger doses of colouring than most kids would normally get. And there was considerable individual variation amongst the kids to the mixtures - so colouring may not affect all kids equally.

But this is the first experimental study that clearly shows a link and it does strengthen the case of those who believe the association is real, the researchers said.

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