

AUTISM

My son Keith is 6 years old and autistic. We had him tested for heavy metals and he was high in mercury, lead and arsenic. When we give him his chelation pills (DMSA) his behaviour gets worse. What should we do?

First of all, thank you for bringing up this important issue. Heavy metal toxicity is a common issue in autism, and many parents report wonderful advances in their children with chelation. Chelation, for those unfamiliar with this treatment, is a way to clean poisonous heavy metals such as mercury and lead out of the body. It was originally developed for lead poisoning from, for example, children eating leaded paint. The most common drug for chelation is DMSA, which has been approved by the FDA for children over one year old. More recently, the same drug – DMSA – has been used in lower doses to bind to heavy metals in patients with autism, or other neurological disorders that are associated with dangerous levels of heavy metals. The DMSA binds to the toxic metals, creating a bigger molecule that our bodies can then remove as waste.

So why would a child's autistic symptoms worsen after being treated with chelation? As effective as the traditional pill format was, it did have a side effect of feeding yeast in a child's intestines, which can aggravate autistic behaviours. Luckily, a new topical DMSA cream is now available. The sulphur in the DMSA, which encourages yeast growth in the intestines, never needs to pass through a child's digestive system if it is used in cream form. It enters the blood stream through the skin, and starts clearing out heavy metals throughout the body, leaving the digestive system undisturbed.

Keith should definitely try this new topical chelation cream. Case reports are coming in from all over the country that show it is effective in lowering the high levels of heavy metals that are associated with many neurological disorders such as autism, ADD and Parkinson's disease. It is absolutely worth giving chelation a second chance in this case. Many autistic children have shown marked improvements after chelating out heavy metals. Many become more verbal, have better eye contact and self-stimulate less, because their brains are better able to function without a high load of toxic metals. This cream is truly a brilliant advance, since doctors no longer need to balance the benefits of chelation against effecting intestinal health.

But why all this talk about intestinal health in response to a question about autism? Unfortunately, the gut has everything to do with autism. Yeast or pathogenic bacteria such as clostridia produce harmful waste that actually intoxicates the brain. Just to show you how linked the issues of autism and gut health are, one study found that in a sample of autistic children, 69.4% had

reflux, 66.7% chronic duodenitis and 58.3% were missing enzymes to digest carbohydrates¹.

The only reason the crucial component of gut health is so overlooked in autism is that autistic children have high pain thresholds, and are often unable to express their intestinal discomfort. Knowing this, I always ask about signs of pain, soiling, constipation, diarrhea, little interest in eating, night time waking, foul smelling breath, or reflux in children. These are clues that there is work to be done. When you decrease intestinal inflammation, children do not get intoxicated by their own gut bi-products and can finally absorb the nutrients their brains need to function.

Because eliminating gut inflammation is so key in dealing with autism, Keith's parents can do some amazing work in this area. They can identify any food allergies, support normal gut flora with probiotics, and work with a holistic or naturopathic doctor to use herbs and nutrients to repair his intestinal lining. The single best thing you can do on your own as a parent of an autistic child is to implement a gluten free, casein free and soy free diet. According to a survey of 933 parents, a gluten and casein-free diet helped 63% of autistic children. Many parents reported the end of chronic diarrhea, better mental focus, better eye contact and increased ability to learn. A gluten, casein and soy-free diet is challenging because it is so restrictive, however, it is worth it to see improvements!

To sum up, here are my main goals in treating autism naturally:

1. Test for metabolic defects, intestinal health and presence of heavy metals
2. Eliminate any food allergies that contribute to gut inflammation
3. Kill yeast and restore healthy gut flora
4. Feed the brain with cofactors needed for proper metabolism (eg. B6 in the form of P5P, B12, magnesium, DMG)
5. Feed the brain essential nutrients (cod liver oil, zinc, taurine, carnosine)
6. Remove heavy metals (if present) that contribute to brain dysfunction and gut inflammation
7. Restore proper immune function

Let's hope that with these suggestions, and the guidance of his doctor, Keith can join the ranks of the many autistic children across this country who are defeating the painful symptoms and limitations of autism, and living more satisfying lives with their families and friends.

Resources

- 1) The best overview of treatment options for autism can be found in "Children with Starving Brains" by Dr. McCandless. She gives a complete overview of DAN! (Defeat Autism Now) protocols and her second edition contains all leading edge therapies. The book is a comprehensive,

¹ Horvath, K et al. "Gastrointestinal abnormalities in children with autistic disorder" Journal of Pediatrics 1999. Nov 135 (5):533-5

compassionate and absolutely essential book for parents of autistic children.

- 2) www.ourkidsasd.com – a wonderful website with nutritional supplements specifically for autism.
- 3) www.autismwebsite.com – the Defeat Autism Now! Website
- 4) www.AutismNDI.com – support for gluten and casein free diet