What’s all the fuss with Food Additives?

Do you know if the lunch box choices you are making could be making your life HARDER in the long run?

According to Additive Alert we are unwittingly consuming 5kg of food additives each year and there is a growing number of chemicals put into everyday foods and drinks that can cause temper tantrums, sleep disturbance and disruptive behaviour! We are seeing a worrying trend with ‘everyday’ lunchbox foods containing food additives that have links to hyperactivity and poor learning outcomes for children.

Everyday kids across Australia are consuming lunchboxes brimming with foods containing food additives proven to cause hyperactivity in children. Ask any veteran teacher about the changes they have seen and more often than not they cite an increase in behavioural difficulties and an increase in ADHD diagnosis amongst their students.

Schools in the UK have also taken steps to ban additives from its meals to address classroom behaviour. Staff from a school in Worcestershire started the trial after discovering a study showing one in four children have tantrums as a result of eating too many additives. They banned 27 additives – including the yellow colouring in custard – during a two week trial. After two weeks staff noticed an improvement in pupils’ behaviour and concentration levels. More than 30% of parents noticed their children were better behaved during the trial and 18% said their children were sleeping better.

In 1986 a trial of a low additive policy for school breakfasts and lunches in 803 schools in New York was associated with a nearly 16% increase in academic ranking compared to the rest of the nation’s schools. The biggest difference was seen in children identified as ‘learning disabled’. (see report by clicking here)

While it is still seen as controversial, the evidence base is growing to show how food can affect hyperactivity, irritability, restlessness, inattention and quality of sleep in children.

As a result of research conducted in the UK products sold in the European Union with certain colours need to carry a warning on food labels, stating the item ‘may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children’. These warnings are not required on products in Australia, so we need to educate ourselves and know which ones are worth avoiding if we want a happy and calm household.

It’s more important than ever to know what you need to avoid.

The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Allergy Unit identified 50 problem-causing food additives that cause reactions in children such as behaviour, asthma, eczema, irritable bowel symptoms, migraine and depression. They found the children improved when certain additives have been eliminated from the diet.

The good news is you don’t need to be chained to the kitchen and make everything from scratch. Many busy families rely on packaged foods, so the key is to know which additives you need to avoid and why.
If you have the time and can get the kids involved making lunch box items from scratch - brilliant. As a home economist I know that this isn’t always possible! Many families are just so busy and time poor they rely on packaged foods to help make life a little easier. The key is to know which additives you need to avoid and why! The good news is you don’t have to avoid everything with a number – just start to focus on the ones that have question marks over their safety.

This list includes the worst additives that most people want to avoid as they are linked to adverse health problems. If you have asthma or other specific health concerns, or if you have young children, there may be other additives you wish to include on your list.

Preservatives: 211, 212, 213, 216, 217, 218, 249, 250, 251, 280, 281, 282
Antioxidants: 310, 311, 312, 319, 320, 321
Gums: 407, 407A, 466
Flavour enhancer: 621, 627, 631, 635, 637
Others: 900, 914, 943, 944, 950, 951, 952, 954, 955, 1201, 1520, 1521

Where to Start?

Start your journey just by looking at one product a week. It’s about making better choices even when you’re too busy to eat well!

Resources:
This simple mobile app allows you to search for Australian and New Zealand food additives – by number AND name! The additive data has been compiled from Additive Alert: Your Guide to Safer Shopping written by Julie Eady. It is such a great resource to compliment to the book. Get the App from these locations

iPhone: https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/additive-alert/id642081101?mt=8
Visit www.MealPlanningYourWay.com

Louise D’Allura
Home Economist and Additive Alert Community Talks Presenter
Meal Planning Your Way
www.MealPlanningYourWay.com
### Spot Light on Lunch/ Snack Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Snacks          | Always choose fresh fruit and vegetables. Go organic where and when you can. Many savoury snacks contain 621 (MSG and mates – as per the Additive Alert card)  
                  - Watch out for colours – artificial and natural colours with hyperactive/ hypersensitive reactions (160b Annatto; 120 Carmines)  
                  - Always choose the plain options when you choose savoury snacks and PLEASE read the label                                                                 |
| Dried fruit     | Asthma avoid sulphites (especially 220 Sulphur Dioxide)  
                  - Choose options without preservatives by reading the label                                                                                          |
| Drinks          | Choose plain water or plain milk or 100% juice  
                  - Watch for artificial colours and 160b in flavoured milks and artificial sweeteners in diet drinks, plus soft drinks may have preservatives, especially 211 – Sodium Benzoate – hyperactivity  
                  - Always choose options without preservatives by reading the label  
                  - Soda Water; Organic softdrinks tend not to have the preservatives                                                                              |
| Bread/ Wraps    | Avoid 282 and watch for antioxidants (319 and 320)                                                                                       |
| Sandwich fillings | Avoid processed cheese as often contains 160b  
                  - Choose real cheese slices  
                  - Choose real spreads  
                  - SMALL amounts of butter, or if you choose mayonnaise pick options with less additives  
                  - Go for food variety – not just preservative free ham! (e.g. salmon/ tuna/ eggs/ salad and cheese/ chicken). |

Need some help now you’re additive alert? We do home visits too!

For Personalised Additive Declutters contact Additive Alert Community Talks Presenter Louise D’Allura on 0408 723 559 or via louise@MealPlanningYourWay.com.  
Visit our website: www.MealPlanningYourWay.com