

How Sugar Sensitivity Can Affect Children

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Do you have smart, creative students who are also cranky, inattentive and sometimes downright obnoxious? These children may have a condition called sugar sensitivity, an inherited biochemical imbalance that can bring about striking changes in the way kids act or feel. Many teachers unwittingly contribute to this dynamic based on the types of snacks and drinks they provide in class. Understanding how you can help keep students balanced helps not only sugar-sensitive children, but all children.

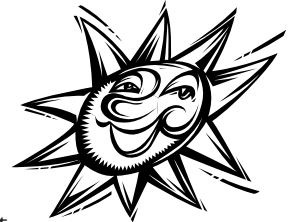


What is Sugar Sensitivity?

Sugar sensitivity is a biochemical condition that affects three areas: blood sugar, beta-endorphins and serotonin levels. In a sugar-sensitive child, these are volatile and easily imbalanced, resulting in children who are tired, depressed, impulsive, tearful, reactive, restless, confused, scattered, isolated, easily frustrated, emotionally overwhelmed. They have short attention spans, low self-esteem, trouble remembering and concentrating and can feel “done to” by others and readily fly off the handle.

The Solution

Because of the volatile nature of their biochemistries, children who are sugar-sensitive respond differently — and negatively — to sugar (in any form) and refined carbohydrates. The condition also makes them crave these very substances, so often they are on a sugar-fueled merry-go-round. Luckily, the solution is clear: feed them a solid protein, with a complex carbohydrate, at regular intervals. All children will benefit from these important nutritional building blocks.



Nutrition Strategies: A Balancing Act

- Provide a dense protein (such as cheese, meat or hard-boiled eggs) in conjunction with a carbohydrate for snacks and meals. Complex carbohydrates (such as whole wheat crackers or bread) are best; don't offer refined carbohydrate snacks or sugary foods if possible. If you include fruit, have them eat it last. Kid-friendly vegetables (such as carrot sticks) are great energy boosters, too!

- Provide water or milk instead of soda or juice.

- Shift the focus of parties from food to fun. If sweets are necessary, make sure they are eaten after a protein/carb snack.

- Make sure kids have a snack or a meal every three hours. This is key for making sure their blood sugar remains stable.



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