



Qigong Sensory Training Institute

## Parent Information on Decreasing Toxic Load Through Diet

### Elimination Diets and Qigong Massage

Before we discuss dietary information, it is important to say that some children respond positively to changing their diet, and other children do not respond at all. Having said that, you won't know which one your child is until you actually try. Once you start qigong massage with your child, he/she will be getting daily detoxification through the massage. Consequently, it will be easier to see if your child is reacting poorly to certain foods or chemicals.

At first glance, the idea of helping autism with elimination diets may seem surprising. However, recent research investigating why children with autism have so many problems with digestion is opening up the possibility of diet change as a helpful intervention for autism. Studies suggest that children with autism frequently have underlying digestive problems that include enzyme deficiencies and inflammation of the digestive tract. Enzyme deficiencies and inflammation of the digestive tract often go hand in hand. If a child doesn't have the enzymes to digest certain foods, these foods tend to irritate the gut. Not only can this cause diarrhea, constipation and poor appetite, but problems with behavior can follow.

Elimination diets attempt to address the underlying digestive problems by removing the offending foods and giving the inflammation a chance to heal so that the gut can once again produce the necessary enzymes. Qigong massage helps the healing process along by strengthening the gut and clearing out the toxins on a daily basis. Later, when your child is stronger from the qigong, you may be able to allow

some of the offending foods back into the diet in small amounts.

### How to Get Started

Children with autism are extremely resistant to any change and may be particularly resistant to diet changes. They often self-select an extremely restrictive diet, sometimes eating only three or four foods with hot dogs, pizza, and macaroni and cheese being frequent favorites.

Parents are often nervous about removing dairy and gluten since these may be the only foods their child actually eats. They are afraid their child may starve. Qigong, however, helps to increase the appetite. Also, removing food from their diet that irritates their guts often results in children expanding their food choices.

In some cases improvement is sudden and dramatic, but in others, positive changes may not be apparent for several weeks. Initially, when gluten and/or casein are removed, the child may even show a temporary worsening of autistic behaviors. This usually lasts from several days to a couple of weeks. It may be easier for the child if only dairy is removed for the first month and then gluten.

Positive changes include more awareness of the environment, more eye contact, decreased self-injurious behaviors, decreased aggression, better bowel function and a eating more types of foods.

### Taking Action

Talking with other parents who have already successfully implemented the same diet can be invaluable. They can act in a mentor role, providing tips regarding shopping, cooking, setting up the kitchen, etc. Furthermore, local support groups and the

Internet (e.g. Yahoo groups) can be very helpful for support, answering questions, and providing recipes.

### **Dairy Elimination Diet**

The suggested time frame for the dairy elimination diet is one month. Foods to avoid include milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, ice cream, and whey (a hidden ingredient in many pre-packaged foods). Suggested substitutes include rice milk and rice ice cream.

### **Gluten Elimination Diet**

The suggested time frame for the gluten elimination diet is four months. Foods to avoid include those containing wheat; rye; barley; oats; bread products such as muffins, cakes, cookies, pasta, pizza, and stuffing; and breaded items such as chicken nuggets and fish sticks. Gluten can be challenging to eliminate from the Western diet.

### **Outside the Home**

Tell everyone with which your child has contact about the special diet, including family members, teachers, church school staff, daycare providers, and friends. Request their help in making sure that your child does not get inappropriate foods. The easiest way to ensure compliance is to always pack and send appropriate foods and snacks with your child.

### **Restaurants**

Restaurants provide another set of challenges. Many authentic Asian restaurants use little dairy or gluten in their

cooking, including Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Indian and Chinese dishes. Many use rice as the basis for noodles and other items. Western style restaurants, on the other hand, are heavily dependent on dairy and gluten.

### **Additional Resources**

*Feingold Association:* [www.feingold.org](http://www.feingold.org); Extensive information and research studies regarding the role of synthetic additives.

*The GFCF Diet:* [www.gfcfdiet.com](http://www.gfcfdiet.com); A support group regarding dietary intervention treatment for autistic spectrum disorders. They confer with manufacturers and provide listings of permissible foods. Excellent pre-packaged gluten free/casein free foods and cooking mixes can be purchased from the website.

*Autism Network for Dietary Intervention:* [www.autismNDI.com](http://www.autismNDI.com); includes research studies pertaining to dietary interventions in autism.

*Special Diets for Special Kids* by Lisa Lewis, Ph.D. (available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and other websites)

*Gluten free cookbooks* by Bette Hagman and Carol Fenster, Ph.D. (available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and other websites)

### **For More Information**

Visit Qigong Sensory Training Institute's website at [www.qsti.org](http://www.qsti.org) or send an e-mail to [info@qsti.org](mailto:info@qsti.org).