

Guidelines For Implementing Supplements in ASD Children

There is a lot of information written and on the internet as to what supplements may be of benefit for ASD children. Rarely is any advice given as how to **safely** introduce these supplements. A common mistake made by health professionals that treat children on the autism spectrum is to implement a range of supplements, at the full dose, all at once. If the supplement regime is beneficial, the parents are happy. If the child gets worse or regresses, the parents are devastated, the health professional may have no idea why or which supplement caused the regression, and the parents are unfortunately less likely to persist with trying the biomedical approach, which can greatly benefit their children. Occasionally it may take the child weeks or months for the regression from incorrect dosing to subside. Hence the need for a structured approach to supplementing these children.

Introducing Supplements

Always implement supplements **one at a time**. By introducing supplements one at a time it is much easier to see if there are any benefits or adverse behaviour. Also for parents just starting their children on supplements, there are some supplements that may initially cause a deterioration in their child's behaviour, however this will settle down in a few days and the child will get better. This often happens when treating gut issues like Candida. An experienced health care professional is essential to help reassure and guide parents through the maze of supplements that are available, whether the behaviour is expected and whether it is an indication of a deficiency in some other supplement. For example hyperactivity or an adverse response to vitamin B6 may require the activated form of B6 (pyridoxal-5-phosphate) instead or more commonly increased levels of magnesium.

The second important point is to always begin implementing individual supplements at a **low dose and slowly increasing the dose** until the full dose is reached. The reason being that the child may respond better to a certain dose, which may be lower than the optimal dose. If the dose is increased the child may regress. This is seen sometimes with zinc supplementation. If the child's behaviour becomes worse when the dose is increased, then simply lower the dose to the previous dose that was tolerated by the child. As a general rule, always begin supplementation at a quarter of the recommended dose and slowly increase the dose. Occasionally even lower doses may need to be used initially.

There is often an **optimal dose** of certain supplements which is in excess of the recommended dosage for a product. The dose of vitamin B6, magnesium and omega-3 oils for instance, is required in doses above the recommended dosages. An experienced practitioner will be able to guide you what dose is appropriate for your child's weight.



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John Pietryka
Biomedical Naturopath
55 Marianne Way
MT WAVERLEY 3149
www.allnaturaladvantage.com.au
Phone: (03) 8802 7687
E-mail: pietryka@optusnet.com.au

Helping children
achieve their full
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Finally, allow a few days between implementing new supplements, just to be confident that there are no adverse reactions developing. Sometimes there is an initial improvement in behaviour, however after a few days the children appear to regress. In this case decrease the dose to the last dose that was tolerated.

Adverse Reactions to Supplements

If a child has an adverse reaction to a supplement or product this may indicate:

- that the child cannot tolerate that supplement at that dose and the dose may need to be adjusted
- the need for another complementary supplement that is needed for the biochemical pathway to work
- the active ingredient in the product is in the wrong form for the body to be able to utilise it (e.g. pyridoxine hydrochloride not being as effective as pyridoxine-5-phosphate: the active form of vitamin B6)
- that the child is reacting to one of the excipients in the supplement (colours, flavours, gluten, casein, etc.). It is always best to choose supplements in their purest form.

The use of practitioner only quality products or products that have been specifically designed for use in the treatment of ASD children, often avoids the worry of adverse reactions to supplements.

Getting Supplements Into Children.

Parents often struggle with supplementing their children. Be assured that you are not the only one that may have child that refuses to take a supplement/s. Some parents have become very inventive in getting supplements into their child. Most of the time the best advice often comes from other parents rather than from medical professionals on how to get supplements into their child. I have compiled a long list of suggestions from parents on how they have managed to get supplements into their children. If you have a child that is refusing supplements, send me an email and I will forward you the list of suggestions that I have collated.