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Change of diet lifts boy's IQ rating 15%

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An experiment involving identical twins has provided astonishing evidence of the effect food additives have on children's behaviour. Scientists have measured for the first time the effect of a change of diet and discovered it can make as much as a 15 per cent difference to **IQ** performance.

British twins Michael and Christopher Parker, aged five, from Crewe, Cheshire, were put on separate diets to test whether additives commonly found in popular children's foods caused temper tantrums and hyperactivity. After just two weeks, Michael, who was banned from eating snacks containing additives, became calmer, chattier and more assertive than his brother, whose diet was unchanged.

Jim Stevenson, a child psychologist from the University of Southampton, devised tests to measure the twins' concentration and **IQ**. Before the experiment, they achieved identical scores and made the same mistakes. They completed the test in the same time.

But a fortnight later Michael outperformed his brother by 15 per cent. Christopher had improved 10 per cent but Michael had improved 25 per cent. Professor Stevenson was not told which twin was additive-free, but correctly picked Michael as the twin who had gone without the so-called junk foods. "The most striking thing, I think, is that Michael is a bit more assertive, perhaps more controlling, certainly more vocal of the two," he said.

The foods banned from Michael's diet included chocolate, artificially coloured sweets, fizzy drinks, flavoured crisps, canned mushy peas, ice cream and tinned vegetables and fruits, unless in natural juices. Snacks he was allowed to eat included fruit, salted crisps, some yoghurts, walnuts, banana chips, butter, still lemonade and honey.

The twins' mother, Lynn, said she was amazed by the improvement in Michael's behaviour. The effects were felt throughout the family, she said. "As a mother it's been quite an eye opener," she said. "You don't realise until you start looking at labels just what is in the food that you're giving your children. Stress levels in the house have gone down, there is less aggression between the two of them, not fighting or arguing much."

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The experiment was extended to the twins' school, where 39 additives were removed from school meals. Parents were also asked to remove additives from their children's diets and monitor their behaviour.

After two weeks, 57 per cent of parents reported an improvement in their child's behaviour and 56 per cent recorded better sleep patterns and co-operation. Maurice Hannsen, author of *E For Additives*, said: "Children who eat a lot of undesirable additives throughout their life and the bad food that goes with undesirable additives are going to finish up with a declining educational standard."

"If you remove the undesirable additives from a child's diet, if you give them a good mixed diet with plenty of interesting fruit and vegetables, I would expect to see several important advantages."

Ian Tokelove, from Britain's Food Commission, which campaigns for safer and healthier food, called on the British Government to investigate the "cocktail" of additives in popular children's foods.

But research by baby-food makers Organix says additives are hard to avoid. They found colourings in 78 per cent of children's desserts, 42 per cent of milk shakes and 93 per cent of sweets. Seemingly healthy foods including some cereal bars and dried fruit contain them.

Professor Kevin Morgan, of Cardiff University in Wales, said the research was in line with previous findings about the effect of diet on children's behaviour and development.

WHAT MICHAEL ATE

Fresh fruit, salted crisps, some yoghurts, walnuts, banana chips, butter, still lemonade (in cartons or fresh) and pure honey. On the banned list were chocolate, artificially coloured sweets, fizzy drinks, flavoured crisps, canned mushy peas, ice-cream, tinned vegetables and fruits (unless in natural juices), red drinks.

WHAT CHRISTOPHER ATE

Christopher was allowed to continue eating all the food which he had been eating previously. This included hamburgers, chips, a variety of lollies, chocolates, soft drinks and school canteen meals, such as meat pies.

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