HACSG
THE HYPERACTIVE CHILDREN'S SUPPORT GROUP

About the Hyperactive Children's Support Group (HACSG)

The Hyperactive Children's Support Group was founded in 1977. For 40 years it helped children and parents who were coping with Hyperactive/ADHD children by offering ideas and information concerning the vital role diet and nutrition can play in their child's wellbeing and behaviour.

Before the HACSG was set up by Sally Bundy MBE and her late mother Vicky Colquhoun, she had been trying to find answers to the hyperactive behaviour of her son for over 5 years. Miles was diagnosed severely hyperactive by a Consultant Psychiatrist when he was two and a half. In addition to the hyperactivity, Miles was also very thirsty, had repeated catarrh and was a very poor sleeper. The only things offered were medications which made him so much worse. Then, a miracle! I chanced upon the work of Dr Ben Feingold in the USA. He proposed that hyperactivity in children could be aggravated by artificial colourings, flavours, certain other additives and salicylates (a naturally occurring aspirin-like chemical which is in many fruits and other fresh foods) found in many processed foods. Sally contacted Dr Feingold and he kindly sent his diet plan which was adopted straight away. Within a week of the dietary changes there was a vast improvement. Things were altogether calmer, thirst diminished, catarrh stopped and sleep was greatly improved. The "wild look" had gone, everyone was amazed and it improved Sally's family life beyond measure – particularly for her son's 2 older sisters. Her health visitor was so amazed that she asked Sally to help other parents; that was the beginning of the HACSG.

1977
In 1977 the popular 'Woman' magazine of the time carried an article about artificial food additives and questioned if they could be harmful. Sally made contact with the editor straight away and they wrote an article about Miles, Dr Feingold and the new organisation. As you can imagine, they were snowed under, as the postman brought sacks and sacks of letters from parents, just like Sally, desperate for help. A diet sheet was put together and sent out along with thousands of copies of the Feingold Food Programme. Many parents got back to say what a difference the diet had made.

1979
In 1979 HACSG achieved charitable status. It also undertook a small survey to gather data into the use of the Feingold Food Programme – this was just one small study, many more were to follow. 214 families replied to the HACSG Questionnaire 74% reported a good response, and 16% a partial improvement.

1980
In 1980 Dr Ben Feingold came over from the USA for a conference at the Royal Free Hospital in London – it was packed out. So many parents and professionals wanted to learn more about how what you ate affected children's Hyperactivity. At that conference was, the now late, Dr David Horrobin who, whilst based in Nova Scotia and Guildford, was researching the role of essential fatty acids (EFAs), omega 6 (in Evening Primrose Oil) for alcoholism and certain mental health conditions. As many of the hyperactive children were often very thirsty, (it was quickly discovered this is a cardinal sign of a deficiency of

EFAs), it was decided that the HACSG, with the help of Dr David Horrobin should undertake to research any benefits of EFAs. The findings were very encouraging.

1981

In 1981 the research was published in *Medical Hypothesis*, however, it was to be another 15 years before the results were picked up by researchers in the University of Purdue, USA. Meanwhile, the HACSG sought meetings with government ministers, held conferences to raise awareness, and wrote countless articles, helping thousands of families around the UK and overseas. The team have had the support of some really great doctors and researchers, over the years. Even Great Ormond Street Hospital set up a programme of research into the effects of dietary change for hyperactive and ADHD children. With Professor Neil Ward at the University of Surrey, HACSG was able to create a database which showed that 89% of the children surveyed were affected by artificial colourings, 71% by artificial peservatives and flavours, 59% had a problem with MSG, 50% milk, 50% chocolate and for 45% oranges proved to be a menace. Over the years they have collated, a great deal of the research outcomes: the Feingold diet, the role of essential fatty acids, vitamins and inerals, fact sheets and publications, which they have been able to make available to readers through its website – of course, all thanks to generous donations and support from parents and professionals. In the last few years there has been considerable interest in the importance of healthy school meals. Celebrities like Jamie Oliver have done a great deal to draw attention to the nutritional needs of children. The Children's Food Campaign (CFC) of which the HACSG was a member, has been working in many areas related to healthy eating and the health of children.

Since 2002

Since 2002 the HACSG has distributed over 20,000 'Hyperactivity in the Classroom' packs to schools and education authorities around the UK, outlining the role of a healthy additive free diet for all school children. In 2007 it achieved great exposure on hyperactivity nutrition and diet issues with several articles appearing in the national press and the work of HACSG was endorsed by major retailers such as M&S and ASDA. It also launched the " Highest Award for Excellence in School Meals", presenting this award to several schools however, the team were particularly pleased to confer this recognition on HC3S – Hampshire County Council's school meals provider. There has also been research by the government to discover whether artificial colourings and preservatives contributed to hyperactivity. Only 6 out of 17 artificial colourings and just 1 preservative sodium benzoate were eliminated in the research, the outcome clearly showed that certain additives did cause hyperactivity. However, there is still so much more to be done...

It was hoped that after a few years the HACSG would no longer be needed, that there had been more than enough research carried out into the effect of additives, food intolerance and nutrition. However, NHS, doctors and psychiatrists still fail to actively endorse, encourage and recommend a first step dietary approach to cope with the challenges of hyperactivity / ADHD. 40 years later, the HACSG were still helping families where they could.

Research

In 1987 the HACSG, with the support of Professor Neil Ward, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry at the University of Surrey and the Group's Scientific Director, found that out of a total of 357 children who had been diagnosed as hyperactive, 87% had adverse reactions to artificial colourings and 72% to artificial preservatives in food.

Similar results were discovered in 1993 at the Institute of Child Health. As long ago as 1987, a Scottish psychiatrist, Dr. Ian Menzies, obtained consistently positive results in treating hyperactive children by removing artificial additives from their diet. Similarly, a report published by the Food Commission confirmed that studies involving 277 children on the Isle of Wight had shown food additives to be a major cause of misconduct in children.

A study commissioned by the FSA and carried out at Southampton University was published in the medical journal The Lancet in September 2007. Its findings supported the Isle of Wight research results, and showed a definite link between food additives and behavioural problems such as hyperactivity and allergic reactions.

The results of this study led to calls to ban all artificial additives in food, especially for children. Major supermarket chains in Britain such as Sainsbury's, have now removed all additives from their own brand products such as soft drinks and children's meals. This is a very positive step forward.

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Artificial Food Colourings and ADHD/Hyperactivity
Two recent reports show that Artificial Colours do contribute to Hyperactivity and ADHD:

- Artificial Colourings and Children by First Steps Nutrition Trust November 2020 (go to www.firststepsnutrition.org to read their report)
- Health Effects Assessment: Potential Neurobehavioral Effects of Synthetic Food Dyes in Children – a Public Review draft from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, in the USA August 2020
- These two new reports show that Artificial Colours do contribute to Hyperactivity and ADHD. It was first proposed by Dr Ben Feingold, Chief Emeritus Professor, Department of Allergy, Kaiser Permanente Medical Centre, San Francisco, USA in the early 1970's that artificial food colourings and other additives contributed to Hyperactivity/ADHD.

Since that time, there have been many studies carried out looking at how food and/or additives might be contributing to children's problems. Our own work shows:

86% of children diagnosed Hyperactive/ADHD had a problem with artificial colours.
Two studies at Great Ormond Street found

70% of the children had a problem with additives
A second study showed 82% reacted to Tartrazine (e102)
Other foods were also implicated as contributing to Hyperactivity and ADHD
Artificial colours were top of the list in all the studies carried out.

The research funded by the University of Southampton in 2007 and the Isle of Wight 2004, which cut out 6 artificial colourings and 1 preservative (Sunset Yellow e110, Quinoline Yellow e104, Carmosine e.122, Allura Red e129, Tartrazine e102, Ponceau 4R e124 and Sodium Benzoate e211) also found the children in the study were affected by these additives.

Following these studies, many UK manufacturers of food, confectionary and soft drinks voluntarily started to remove these 6 artificial colourings. Some went further and removed all artificial colourings.

However it was disappointing to learn that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) were not going to call for a ban on all artificial colourings, as we had hoped. Instead, the EFSA decided that a warning notice should be placed on all products using the 6 colours which caused hyperactivity. The warning said: " May have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children "

Many of you will probably never even noticed the warning on products as it is usually tucked away at the back of a product in such tiny lettering it would not be noticed.

Everyone who has an interest in the health and wellbeing of the children needs to be calling for a ban on all artificial colours. Ideally and at the very least, this warning needs to be on the front of all products using these 6 colours for all to see. The problem is, there

are another 11 artificial colourings and the preservative e211 Sodium Benzoate was not included in the EFSA warning label.

Now we have left the EU we are hoping more might be done by the FSA (Food Standards Authority) to have all the artificial colourings banned in the UK.

- References: The Isle of Wight study by Bateman et al- Archives of Disease in Childhood, 2004: 89 : 506-511 found that artificial colours and Soduim Benzoate could be a cause of Hyperactivity.
- The Southampton Study by Professor Jim Stevenson, Donna McCann, et al published in the Lancet 6th September 2007 www.lancet.com
- Professor Andrew Kemp from the University of Sydney, said an additive free diet should be tried before medication in ALL Cases of ADHD. Published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Vol 363. Page 1144 24th May 2008.
- Boris M & Mandel F S, PhD. Foods and Additives are common causes of ADHD in children: Annals of Allergy, Vol72 pages 462-468 May 1994.
- Tartrazine, E102 Azo Dye: The influence of the Chemical Additive Tartrazine on the Zinc Status of Hyperactive Children, a Double Blind Placebo- Controlled Study by Professor Neil Ward PHD, Kevin Soulsbury BSc et al published in the Journal of Nutritional Medicine 1. 51-57 1990