

The **Feingold Diet** derives from the program suggested in the book "[Why Your Child is Hyperactive](#)", first published in the 1970s by Dr. Benjamin Feingold, a pediatrician and allergist. He went on to develop and promote his dietary approach to helping children with learning and behavior problems, since categorized as Attention Deficit Disorder (**ADD**) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (**ADHD**).

The Feingold Diet is based on the premise that allergic reactions or sensitivities to certain types of foods cause or contribute to ADD/ADHD symptoms, such as problems with:

- Behavior (marked hyperactivity, impulsive and compulsive actions, emotional concerns)
- Learning (short attention span, neuro-muscular difficulties, cognitive and perceptual disturbances)
- Health (physical complaints and/or sleep problems)

### The full Feingold Program

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#### **How it functions**

The Feingold Program is more comprehensive than a simple diet, and operates in two stages. **Stage 1** eliminates chemical compounds in particular food additives, and salicylate compounds in certain foods (and non-food items such as fragrances - hence the name Program rather than Diet). See below for a list of items for elimination. **Stage 2** involves identifying which salicylates (if any) can be tolerated.

#### **Does it work?**

Many ADD/ADHD sufferers who follow the Feingold Program have experienced great improvements in focus and behavior. There is a considerable (recent) research to back this up ([see more](#)).

Studies in the early nineties show that around 75% of children improve on a diet that restricts additives.

#### **What it does**

The Feingold Program eliminates these additives and chemicals:

- Synthetic coloring (are made from petroleum - crude oil)
- Artificial flavoring (combinations of many natural and synthetic chemicals - eg imitation vanilla flavoring or "vanillin" might originate from the waste product of paper mills). There has been little research carried on these chemicals.
- Artificial preservatives (BHA, BHT, and TBHQ, made from petroleum; also termed "anti-oxidants" because they prevent or delay the "oxidization" of fats in foods, which make them rancid)

- Salicylates (a group of chemicals related to aspirin, which are a naturally occurring pesticide in particular food plants - see 'Food sources of salicylates' below; also manufactured and used in many products including medicines, perfumes and solvents). Only some are eliminated on the Feingold diet.
- Artificial sweeteners (only aspartame is eliminated)
- Other food additives considered undesirable (such as MSG, sodium benzoate, nitrites, sulfites) - these are not eliminated - but are noted in the food list.

### **Food Sources of Salicylates**

Almonds, Apples, Apricots, Aspirin, Berries, Cherries, Cloves, Coffee, Cucumbers, Currants, Grapes, Nectarines, Oil of wintergreen, Oranges, Peaches, Peppers (bell & chilli), Pickles, Plums, Prunes, Raisins, Rose hips, Tangelos, Tangerines, Tea, Tomatoes

### A Staged Dietary Plan

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A less rigorous approach than the Feingold Program, given that many studies have shown the sensitivity of some children to dyes, is to start by eliminating only those foods (and vitamins, drugs, and toothpastes) that contain artificial colorings.

If initial dietary changes have little benefit (i.e. excluding only dyes), try the complete Feingold diet. It is important to use a diet diary or journal.

If that doesn't help, the Feingold Association recommends eliminating:

- corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, and corn sugar (in soft drinks and other sweetened foods)
- MSG (monosodium glutamate) and HVP (hydrolyzed vegetable protein, which contains some glutamate)
- sodium nitrite (in luncheon meats)
- calcium propionate (in baked goods)

After several weeks, if the child's behavior has improved, every few days restore one eliminated food or ingredient at a time. Repeat that two or three times if a problem occurs, to confirm that the food is really a culprit.

If the child's behavior did not improve on the Feingold diet, try a "few-foods" diet, which involves more extensive restrictions (see [Elimination diets](#)). Studies show that some children are sensitive not just to food additives but also to such foods as:

- wheat
- eggs
- milk and other dairy foods
- chocolate
- soybeans/tofu

- corn products (including corn sugar and syrup)

Eliminate as many of those foods as possible, plus artificial colorings and other additives. Children can eat fresh meat and poultry, any vegetable (except corn and soybeans), fruits and fruit juices (but not citrus fruit/juice and not beverages normally consumed daily), rice, and oats.