



The Effect of Sugar on Children's Behavior

A popular but controversial belief is that children are more likely to be hyperactive if they eat sugar, artificial sweeteners, or certain food colorings. Hyperactivity refers to increased movement, impulsive behavior, and decreased attention span.

Research indicates that refined (processed) sugars may have some effect on children's activity. Because refined sugars and carbohydrates enter the bloodstream quickly, they produce rapid fluctuations in blood glucose levels. This might trigger adrenaline and make a child more active. Sometimes, falling adrenaline levels bring on a period of decreased activity.

Regardless of the true impact of sugar on children's activity level, reducing it is a good idea. Sugar remains the major culprit in tooth decay. High-sugar foods also tend to have fewer vitamins and minerals, and may replace more nutritious foods. High-sugar foods also have many unnecessary calories that can lead to obesity.

Recommendations:

- Limit the amount of processed sugars that your children eat as much as possible.



- Add plenty of fiber to your child's diet to keep adrenaline levels more constant. For breakfast, fiber is found in oatmeal, shredded wheat, berries, bananas, whole-grain pancakes. For lunch, fiber is found in whole-grain breads, peaches, grapes, and other fresh fruits.
- Provide "quiet time" so that children can learn to calm themselves at home.

If your child cannot sit still when other children their age can, or if they cannot control impulsive behavior, seek a professional evaluation.

Source: <http://www.umm.edu/ency/article/002426all.htm#ixzz2Mgz2UMdQ>

Teaching Your Child to Express Feelings

Young children deal with many of the same emotions adults do, but they often do not have the words to talk about how they are feeling. Instead, they may act out these emotions in very physical and inappropriate ways.

Parents can help children understand and express their emotions. Here are some strategies to help your child express his or her feelings:

Give the feelings names and then encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling. For example, you might say, "Daddy left on a trip, you are sad. You said you want your daddy." Giving your child a label for their emotions develops a vocabulary for talking about feelings.

Provide children with lots of opportunities to identify feelings in themselves and others. For example, you might say to your child, "Riding your bike is so much fun. I see you smiling. Are you happy?"

Teach your children ways they can deal with feelings. Talk about positive and not so positive ways to express feelings. You might talk about taking a deep breath when angry, getting an adult to help resolve a conflict, asking for a turn when others won't share, asking for a hug when sad, and finding a quiet space to calm down.

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

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Understanding emotions is a critical part of children's overall development. It is up to adults to teach children to understand and deal with their emotions in appropriate ways. Give your children many opportunities to practice new strategies and always give lots of positive encouragement.

Source: *Teaching Your Child to Identify and Express Emotions*, The Center for Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel>.

Test your knowledge: Added Sugar in Food

- T F One 12 oz. can of regular soda contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar.
- T F Dextrin, malt, and molasses are not considered hidden sugars.
- T F Sports drinks, energy drinks, and fruit drinks contain added sugar.
- T F A 4 oz. piece of angel food cake has more added sugar than a 4 oz. piece of cheese-cake.

Answers: 1) T, 2) F, 3) T, 4) T

Teething in Babies

When a baby becomes cranky and more difficult to comfort, it may be due to teething. Although timing varies widely, babies often begin teething by about age 6 months. Teeth slowly slide and twist their way through gum tissue, and sharp teeth pushing through sensitive gums may hurt.

Classic symptoms of teething and suggested solutions include:

Drooling -- Wipe your baby's face often with a cloth to remove the drool, keep it dry, and prevent rashes from developing.

Chewing on solid objects -- Give your baby something to chew on. Make sure it's big enough so that he or she can't swallow it and that it can't break into small pieces. A wet washcloth placed in the freezer for 30 minutes makes a handy teething aid - just be sure to wash it after each use.

Sore or tender gums -- Use a clean finger, moistened gauze pad or damp washcloth to massage the gums. The pressure may ease your baby's discomfort.



Irritability or crankiness -- If your baby seems irritable, acetaminophen may help - but always consult your child's doctor first. Never place an aspirin against the tooth, and don't rub whiskey on your baby's gums.

Your baby will have his or her own style of teething but it has a genetic link, so ask your mother or mother-in-law for suggestions! Chances are it will require your patience, creativity and compassion. The good news is that it's a temporary stage.

Sources: *MN Parents Know* article on Teething, and <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/teething/FL00102>.



Trusted parenting information, resources and activities to help your children grow, develop and learn from birth through high school at www.MNParentsKnow.info.

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