

Supplements will disappoint parents of ASD kids, new study finds

By ACSH Staff — June 4, 2015



It is understandable that parents of children with autism spectrum

disorder (ASD) are eager to find a way to help their kids overcome the problems associated with their conditions perhaps there is a lack of some micronutrients that make the situation worse. Or perhaps a special diet will improve a child's status. But sometimes the treatment is not what it is advertised to be. So it seems to be with vitamin/mineral supplementation, according to a [study](#) [1] published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

Led by Dr. Patricia A. Stewart of the University of Rochester Medical Center, investigators examined the intake of foods and supplements by 288 children aged 2-11 years who had been diagnosed with ASD. Their main outcome measure was the percent of the children who met or exceeded the upper limits of micronutrient intake.

About 56 percent of the children used dietary supplements. In spite of that, the most common micronutrient deficits were not corrected even after supplementation over 40 percent lacked calcium, and over 30 percent were low in vitamin D. In addition, many children with ASD are on a gluten-free and casein-free (GFCF) diet in the hopes that such a treatment will help their condition. But their calcium intake was still low, although their vitamin D intake had improved. On the other hand, many of the supplement users in the study actually exceeded the Tolerable Upper Limit for safe intake levels of vitamin A, folic acid, and zinc.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava said The idea that extra vitamins and minerals can improve complex disorders such as ASD is too simplistic. Such supplementation should be used to be sure that nutrition is adequate, not to treat other conditions.

ACSH scientific advisor Dr. Marvin Schissel, who is quite experienced with the manifold types of quackery exploiting families with ASD children, added, I agree that nutritional supplementation without supervision is pointless or worse. Specialty diets do not prevent or help autism. Of course if a deficiency is properly diagnosed then supplementation is appropriate.

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[1] <http://www.andjrnl.org/article/S2212-2672%2815%2900390-1/abstract>