

SUPPLEMENTS FOR AUTISM: WHAT WORKS?

Before starting my journey with homeopathy, I started to read about biomedical intervention and worked with a naturopathic doctor for a few months.

I can say that I tried just about all the vitamins and mineral supplements you read about, so here is my review on the most widely used.

From my personal and professional experience, only a handful of supplements are actually useful, however.

The timing of giving these supplement is also important: when you are first starting treatment, it is most likely that they will not produce any results.

This is because the system is already over-burden with toxins. The first things to deal with are toxins and strengthen the immune system. After that, diet and supplementation will be able to make a difference.

For a free 20 minute Assessment Session with me, book an appointment on my calendar: <https://www.homeopathyheal.co.uk/contact-me/>

MELATONIN

Melatonin is a hormone produced in our pineal gland and is associated with control of our sleep cycle.

Many children on the spectrum or with ADHD have trouble falling asleep and therefore, melatonin is a natural supplement that is widely used to help with this issue.

PRO: it does help with falling asleep in most cases and there are no reported side effects.

CON: it does not help with staying asleep. Children with sleep disturbances will still wake up in the middle of the night and no amount of melatonin will help in that case.

VITAMIN B12

Many children with autism are advised to start taking this vitamin straightaway. Why?

There are entire biomedical protocols for autism based on B12 Methylcobalamin injections. This particular type of B12 is supposed to help with the methylation process, which is crucial to the natural elimination of toxins.

PRO: if successful, the vitamin helps with the methylation process, toxins are removed more easily from the body. This improves gut and brain functions. Patients report improved cognition, behaviour and speech.

CON: the best way to administer this vitamin is through injections. Therefore it is necessary to work with a medical doctor for guidance on dosage and frequency.

Some patients may be over-sensitive to this vitamin and the reaction can be severe: aggravation in mood, anger, aggressive behaviour is not uncommon (that is what happened to my son and we had to stop).

A large portion of children with autism report no improvements at all after going through this therapy.

PROBIOTICS

Many parents are aware of the “gut-brain connection”. It is no coincidence that most children with autism present some degree of gastro-intestinal issues. Probiotics promise to help populate the gut with “good bacteria” in order to fight the “bad bacteria” and improve GI function.

The question is: which probiotics?

There are so many on the market these days! My rule of thumb is: at least 2 billion good bacteria per portion and at least 10 different strains of bacteria in the bottle. What research has found is that children on the spectrum have a very limited range of good bacteria and we need as many as possible in order to keep a healthy gut.

PRO: sometimes bowel movements become more regular and stools are better formed.

CON: many parents cannot see any improvements at all even after a few months. In some cases, the child is very sensitive and there will be an adverse reaction (restlessness, hyperactivity, insomnia). This is usually a sign that the gut issues are particularly deep and a different approach needs to be taken.

OMEGA 3 and 6

The “brain supplements”, right?

The idea is that our brains need fat, good fat, as a kind of lubricant, like a well oiled engine.

Again, there are many, many different brands on the market and it can be overwhelming to look for the best one that fits our needs.

First of all: the ratio between omega 3 and omega 6 needs to be right.

Our modern diet is way too rich in omega 6, which is actually pro-inflammatory. We get it from vegetable oils used in the food industry.

Conversely, unless we have a diet rich in fish, our intake of omega 3 is usually very low.

This needs to be taken into account when choosing a supplement.

PRO: some studies show that omega 3 supplementation improve the symptoms in children with autism, particularly behaviour, anxiety and speech.

CON: many patients report no noticeable improvement and a small percentage of children report side effects like skin rashes and loose stools.

CBD OIL

Cannabis oil is one of the latest fads in health supplements. For a while it was touted as the “miracle cure” for just about everything: from chronic pain to Parkinson’s to autism and more.

Many parents of autistic children have heard of the Charlotte’s Web brand of CBD oil. It was created by the parents of a little girl who suffered from seizures and the parents experimented with many varieties and cross bred difference species until they found what worked for their daughter.

This is the main issue with CBD: there are many, many different varieties of cannabis plants. There are yet no studies that show the medicinal properties of these varieties and no therapists with sufficient knowledge to guide patients.

Concentration and percentage of THC (the bit of the plant that makes (the bit of the plant that makes ou “high”) vary in different countries, due to different legislation. Some experts claim that a minimum % of THC is required for the CBD to be effective, however, that is not always legally allowed.

PRO: CBD oil or gummies is easily available and relatively inexpensive.

CON: in my experience it doesn't do anything for children on the spectrum, unless you are lucky enough to come across the right variety/brand, but it is pure pot luck.

MULTIVITAMINS FOR CHILDREN

The sugar and general rubbish content of these vitamins is such that there are no advantages at all.

The vitamins are usually artificially made, which means the body will not recognise them and will just expel them all with urine.

There are no pros.

IRON

Iron deficiency is often an issue in children with autism and it is therefore one of the common mineral supplements advised by biomedical doctors.

The issue with supplementing minerals is absorption. Sometimes, if the pathways are blocked or because of some other issues, minerals can be supplemented and yet not absorbed by the body.

Another thing to keep in mind is that iron needs vitamin B12 in order to be better absorbed, which means that children who are sensitive to B12 will react badly to iron supplements too.

PRO: easy to take and to source and inexpensive

CON: too much iron can cause constipation, people with vitamin B12 sensitivity can have adverse reaction to iron supplements.

MAGNESIUM

Another mineral that autistic children are often found lacking is magnesium. Lack of magnesium is supposedly responsible for:

-lack of sleep

-constipation

-anxiety

-hyperactivity

It is important to bear in mind that there are different types of magnesium:

Magnesium Glycinate: the best-absorbed form, it's the easiest on the intestines, and it's relatively inexpensive.

Magnesium Threonate: This form of magnesium is best suited for treating neurological symptoms, like headaches, because it easily crosses the blood-brain barrier.

Magnesium Citrate: This type of magnesium works well in the treatment of severe constipation. However, be cautious with magnesium citrate because it can cause cramping and intestinal irritation at higher doses.

PRO: easily available and inexpensive, magnesium can be absorbed through the skin, so cream form is available for those who don't like swallowing tablets.

CON: high doses can cause stomach cramps

ZINC

This is another mineral that children on the autistic spectrum seem to have less of, compared to neurotypical children.

Zinc deficiency is linked to repetitive behaviour, anxiety and hyperactivity.

PRO: easily available and relatively inexpensive

CON: there is no data to confirm the benefits of zinc supplementation on the symptoms of autism.

CoQ10

Another of the latest “wonder supplements”. You may notice that whenever a supplement is elevated to “super drug” status, you will find it everywhere: skin creams, shampoos and so on.

This is a supplement that is advised in cases of mitochondrial dysfunction. When the cells in the body are too weak or damaged, they will die more quickly or function at half-power and this supplement is supposed to help with that.

There are no PROs that I can see: I haven’t seen any improvements from this supplement.

CON: it is expensive; it can cause some reaction, like vomiting and nausea.