



### In the News – Targeted amino acid therapy for kids with behavioral and emotional problems

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#### Targeted amino acid therapy for kids with behavioral & emotional problems

There continues to be a growing trend for pharmacological interventions for children with behavioral and emotional disorders. Not surprisingly, the number of adverse effects have increased parents' search for nutritional considerations for these children. A randomized clinical study published in December 2010 evaluated the efficacy of nutritional ingredients such as glutamine and glutamate analogue, L-theanine and 5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP) (precursor of serotonin) for adopted kids with a history of trauma. The study revealed a significant increase of urinary markers of serotonin and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) with corresponding reports of significant decrease in the childrens' behavioral problems. These initial results are encouraging and suggest the need to further investigate the clinical efficacy of nutritional therapy for behaviorally at-risk children (**Child Care Health Dev. 2020 Dec 20**).

#### Advice from Dr. Aaron Hoo

Firstly, it is essential to remember that children act out when they are confused, scared, distrust or feel unheard. To often they are medicated for these emotional outbursts instead of given the opportunity to help them feel safe, heard and understood. It is also not uncommon for behavioral issues to reflect underlying food intolerances – I have often found that just by removing dairy, wheat, processed foods and/or sugar result in 'miraculous' changes in childrens' behaviour (the same goes for adults by the way...).

As such, modifying food choices coupled with targeted nutritional therapy is a safe, effective and natural solution to an otherwise stressful or even sometimes, embarrassing social situation. Recall that L-theanine is an analogue of glutamic acid and amino acid derivative found in green tea (*Camellia sinensis*). Not only does green tea contain anti-oxidant and anti-cancer properties, the L-theanine component is wonderfully calming.

The human body manufactures 5-HTP from L-tryptophan, a natural amino acid found in most dietary proteins such as meats, fish, nuts, avocado and cheese; however eating foods that contain L-tryptophan does not significantly increase 5-HTP to therapeutic values; alternatively, the major dietary source of 5-HTP is the African plant Griffonia simplicifolia

#### Naturopathic Options:

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#### Featured Recipe

##### Oat Bran Muffin (8 muffins)

**Ingredients:** ¾ cup almond milk, 1 tbsp lemon juice, ½ cup oat bran, 1 ¾ cups whole oats, 1 tsp baking powder, ½ tsp baking soda, ¼ tsp salt, ¼ cup chopped walnuts or almonds, ¾ cup unsweetened applesauce, ½ cup dates or dried apples. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Spray muffin cups with oil and set aside. Combine almond milk and lemon juice in a cup and allow to sit about 10 minutes or until curdles form. Combine dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add almond milk/lemon juice combination and applesauce, mixing gently with a spoon until completely moistened. Stir in dried fruit but do not over-mix. Spoon into prepared muffin tin, filling about ¾ full. Bake 20-25 minutes until lightly browned. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan. - Bon a petit!

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