

Reader reports from the Food Intolerance Network

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("benzoate", "210", "211" keywords only)

[1320] My young son has learnt his "happy" and "cranky" foods, but perfumes are the worst (March 2015)

My 3yr old son Jack is salicylate and benzoate intolerant. I began this journey after googling head banging and your website appeared with a wealth of information on annatto160b. I eliminated everything we were consuming Kraft cheese, yoghurt, ice-cream etc and noticed a drastic improvement. My toddler no longer banged his head on the floor or the walls.

After doing a supervised elimination diet, we spent the greater part of last year learning about failsafe eating and adapting our lifestyle accordingly. We went through the stage of convincing pre-school and family members that salicylate intolerance really does exist and after providing them with fact sheets from your web site they are more understanding.

Jack has learnt his "happy" and "cranky" foods and even asks if certain foods have salicylate or colours in them. A great learning tool was the weekly grocery shopping. The fruit and veg department became our classroom as we would talk about salicylate and foods that make us feel happy or cranky. The curiosity of a then 2yr old is amazing.

Benzoate was our hidden problem though. It was not until severe reactions to phenergan and valium that we joined the dots. Jack required a CT brain scan so sedatives were prescribed. After giving Jack valium, 6hrs later and we were still driving around with a 2yr old singing Playschool songs in short hand and stating I feel funny. Finally he fell asleep - yes that lasted for all of 15mins, we got the scan done and he was still bouncing off the walls at 11pm that night!

I have since learnt that poor Jack has been reacting his whole life. Baby panadol, bonjela, infacol - yes all salicylate and or benzoate as ingredients! In reality we have been making things worse for Jack by giving him over the counter medications that people use everyday in an attempt to ease pain.

Since managing most of the food issues we are now noticing reactions to chlorine, air freshners (at Nan's) and perfume (visiting aunts). A weekend visit to relatives has become a minefield of scents and hidden benzoates.

Like others I have read about we too notice a difference in behaviour after weekly swimming lessons in a chlorinated pool. After many attempts we have finally got Jack to wear goggles, but he seems to compulsively lick or drink the pool water (I am assuming he is getting some kind of fix from it). The level of aggression following lessons is what led us to draw the link.

It is a constant battle with one so young who cannot fully verbalise what he is feeling, he just reacts with kicking, hitting, head butting, talking gibberish and constantly rubbing his nose and playing with his tongue. Jack's reactions last 8 days and at the end of the reaction he gets very upset and clingy.

Dealing with food intolerance can be very isolating. When you hear comments that your child is a "horrid vicious child", as I have had said to me, it is upsetting. Or being told it would be good if you

came to the birthday party late so we can have all the GOOD FOOD (junk full of colours and preservatives) before you arrive.

Perseverance does pay though and family and friends are noticing the difference. My parents can now distinguish between toddler behaviour and a chemical reaction. I would like to say a BIG THANK YOU for all the time and effort you put in to providing us novices with such a wonderful resource. There seems to be an endless amount of information we need to process in order to protect our children and your web site and cook books have been of tremendous assistance. Your efforts keep us sane!

UPDATE 3 years later: to re read our story (above) made me cry. I had forgotten just how far we have travelled on this journey to a new way of living. We still have our good and bad times, but food is under control, it's just inhaled salicylate/benzoates that cause us the most grief.

Jack is now 6yrs old and in year 1 at school. I spent a considerable amount of time educating the principal and his teacher last year on food intolerance and fortunately they were open to being educated! The Principal even made note of a new student having chemical intolerance in the school newsletter, and requested parents be aware that wearing fragrance in the classroom would have an adverse effect on one of the students.

As we all know this doesn't guarantee people will abide by the request, but after years of slogging away, to have the Principal accept the literature we provided him & be willing to assist, was a relief. He did liken food /chemical intolerance to when nut allergy firstly came about. He remembers a lot of scepticism re nut allergy & was willing to accept that food intolerance was a real issue for Jack; the greater community just wasn't aware of it.

The school toilets with the automatic air fresheners are our biggest problem at school. Again though the Principal arranged for Jack to use a toilet in the administration block that did not have an air freshener. This worked for most of kindergarten, but kids being kids the teasing about being different has kicked in, so now Jack is unwilling to go to the administration block for bathroom breaks (which is understandable).

Most of the kids in his class are fine about Jack having his own treats for special occasion days at school, but there are always 1 or 2 kids who like to remind him his food is different (yes, tastier/healthier and home made!). I take cup cakes to school at the start of each term for class birthdays and leave them in the freezer. The lady who runs the school canteen has been lovely, and lets me take homemade pizza or chicken nuggets in and she heats them up, so Jack can have a lunch order just like the other kids.

On reflection we have been blessed with the staff we have encountered at school. I have gotten quiet good at smuggling my homemade chicken nuggets and French fries into McDonalds birthday parties. I did approach them about re-heating nuggets for me, but food safety standards won't allow them to. Now I heat them just before I leave and travel with a heated medipack in an insulated lunch bag. Then there is another one with an ice brick in it for the homemade ice cream cake!

As I said food is the easy part. Shopping centres, toilets, theatres and hotels are still places we try and not frequent too often. Even going to the Doctors is an issue, with other patients in the waiting room wearing fragrance, the hand sanitisers and air fresheners.

We love our Rainbow Air and are no longer scared about staying in hotels. Though I still do spend a lot of time researching establishments that we can access without going through lobbies/foyers and elevators. Caravan parks with cabins or your old fashioned single story motels are safest.

Again Sue, I want to thank you for your tireless efforts in guiding us and reminding us we are not alone. To be honest the bad days can be really bad when trying to calm a child high on chemical overload. It is exhausting. To know others in this forum understand and are experiencing similar is comforting. Those in my circle of friends try and understand, but until you see an outburst first hand, you can't fully understand. - Nicole by email

[1176] Salicylates, benzoates, additives linked to asthma, ADD, headaches (February 2013)

Our paediatrician advised us to try failsafe eating for our 8 year old boy after years of struggles with asthma and ADD. What a change. For the first winter in 8 years he has gone medication free - his usual line up was prednisolone, antibiotics, 2 x preventative puffers and constant ventolin.

We tried the benzoate challenge. Within 24 hours of trying one glass of lemonade he was coughing again (causing mucous/vomiting as well) and needing ventolin for the next 48 hours. The same happened after a neighbour 'kindly' gave him a blueberry frostee! 48 hours later we are still recovering, but this time from headaches as well! – Meg, NSW

FIN Comment

Most children's medications contain benzoate preservatives (also called hydroxybenzoates or parabens) - even asthma medications - and these too can contribute to asthma, eczema and hives as well as behavioural effects.

Asthma and intolerance to benzoates <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8952792>

Clinico-immunological study of 16 cases of benzoate intolerance in children <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9162174>

[997] Asthma: hospital admissions - from one per week to one per year (March 2011)

First, I have to thank you for the work you have done. It is just over 3 years since I first picked up a copy of Fed Up with Asthma after my then 16 month old son was diagnosed. The medication did not seem to be working as it should, and I knew there was something else going on. He has major difficulties with sulphites, MSG and flavour enhancers (and natural glutamates) and benzoates (although we still avoid all preservatives and artificial colours because we are used to it now!), and after seeing an allergist and finding a nut allergy as well, all the pieces fit together. He is now a happy and healthy little boy about to start pre-school, whose nut allergies have been decreasing over the last two years - in fact his peanut allergy is totally gone - and has gone from one hospital admission a week to one every 8-12 months. We truly thank you, because it was your book that put us on the right track. Clare, NSW

[838] Toothpaste for sensitive teeth (August 2009)

I've been doing a little research about the ingredients in the available toothpaste options for sensitive teeth – they all contain colours and flavours, and about half also contain two benzoate preservatives (which give me throat clearing/coughing for at least an hour afterwards). Most of them contain Potassium Nitrate as the active ingredient. I think this chemical is causing me to feel extremely unmotivated, disinterested in life, sometimes depressed.– by email, Vic. (Potassium nitrate is preservative 252, one of our nasty additives to avoid. It is even used in a particular brand of sensitive toothpaste labelled rather misleadingly “no added preservatives”. See the [Nitrates](#)

[factsheet](#). See also a Nitrates - Alzheimers link in Research, [Failsafe Newsletter #61](#). For prevention of sensitive teeth, see <http://www.saveyoursmile.com/healtharticles/sensitiveteeth.html>)

[794] Thrush and a preserved herbal drink (June 2009)

I am interested in the possible effects of sodium benzoate. I note that this preservative is used in an aloe vera drink. When I increased my dose of the aloe vera drink, it was around the same time that I developed a case of candida. [Aloe vera contain salicylates, so it could be a combination of the salicylates in the drink drink as well as sodium benzoate preservative which is chemically very similar to salicylates.] - by email

[711] Heart symptoms from benzoates, bread preservative and sulphites (December 2008)

My 14-year-old son has Aspergers syndrome. He experiences arrhythmia and severe heart palpitations every time he consumes any additives 211, 282, 220 etc. If he has been free from these additives for over two weeks then he will get away with the first exposure and then it accumulates and gets worse. We saw a heart specialist and he found no problems, just blaming it on anxiety. He also gets more aggressive and violent once it accumulates... like Jekyll and Hyde. Sadly it is so hard to convince and be believed by doctors and his psychiatrist that these additives affect him. – *Therese, by email*

[703] 210: Croup, asthma, behaviour related to benzoates or sulphites (November 2008)

My daughter ended up with croup and asthma from doing the sulphite challenge and that she also ended up with croup, asthma and a chest infection from doing the lemonade (sodium benzoate 211) challenge. Her behaviour changed so much with the lemonade challenge that her pre-school teacher asked me to stop the challenge on the second day. This still resulted in high behaviour and many other conflicts with anyone she was around, very short fuse amongst other things – *reader, Qld*

[610] 210: Severe reaction to a chromium supplement with unlisted benzoate (February 2008)

I recently purchased a bottle of liquid Chromium Picolinate supplement which I was told contained water and the mineral. I took 1ml of the liquid with my lunch - 5ml is the correct dose but I always need to be cautious. Within 10 mins I started to feel spaced out and then over the next 2 hours had blurred vision, heart palpitations, was disorientated and needed to lie down. My tongue and throat had the feeling of swelling and breathing was slightly laboured. After a few hours my joints became swollen, inflamed and painful.

My husband phoned the telephone number on the bottle to see if there was anything added to the liquid other than those things stated on the bottle. He was told that it has a preservative in it called Methyl Paraben or Methyl 4-Hydroxybenzoate [preservative 218]. There is nothing on the bottle to suggest this.

I am intolerant of many preservatives, additives, salicylates and amines etc. but never before have I had such and quick and violent reaction. Today 24 hours later I'm feeling much better but certainly nothing like normal.

My reason for writing is that the firm did not take any responsibility for not having the bottle labelled, were unconcerned about my condition and refuse to credit us the price of the product which cost \$16.50. To whom can I write and complain about this appalling breach of labelling and also warn others of its danger? [answer:Consumer Adverse Medication Events Line: Ph 1300 134 237, <http://www.tga.gov.au>] – by email

[596] From 'severe inattentive ADD' to 'normal' due to diet (November 2007)

In 2006 my quiet 7 year old daughter was diagnosed by her paediatrician as having severe inattentive ADD. He offered Ritalin to help the symptoms. I was not comfortable giving her this as a first step because in the 2 weeks since our last appointment I had read 10 books and scanned the net. A common theme kept coming up. If your child has an intolerance to a food group there is a likelihood of more than one intolerance which can lead to behavioural issues. I felt I had to investigate this before trying medication because we already knew she had a dairy intolerance as a baby.

I chose to follow the Fed Up elimination diet by Sue Dengate. Following are the results when food groups or additives were re introduced.

Colours - anger followed by tears, inattention, lack of concentration, memory loss, head banging and rocking

MSG/635/Glutamates - nausea and stomach cramps

Benzoates - aggression

Antioxidants (310-312, 319-320) - nightmares and trouble going to sleep and staying asleep

Propionates 282 - bedwetting and daytime bladder control issues

Dairy - nausea, stomach cramping, diarrhea, inattention, fatigue

Soy - stomach aches

It has been 14 months since adapting to my daughter's dietary needs. She has been reassessed for ADD with a normal out come. Her school work has progressed. She is able to concentrate. She can tie her shoes, hold a knife and fork, remember her phone number, ride a bike, and skip a rope. She is able to follow multiple directions and hold attention to the task at hand. She has friends. We have also discovered she is a budding artist.

Through dietary changes we helped many of our daughter's physical and behavioral issues including fatigue, tearfulness, emotional outbursts, inattention, lack of short term memory, lack of application at school, bedwetting, vaginal irritation, rash, insatiable appetite, imbalance and clumsiness (she could not ride a bike, skip, hop), nausea and stomach cramps.

My daughter did not need medication. She has food intolerances. As grandma said 'Whatever you are doing keep doing it. She is a different child' - Trudi, NSW

[543] Covered in eczema at age of three (January 2007)

By the time she was three, my daughter was covered in eczema and watching videos all day as she couldn't keep up with other children. We now have a healthy five-year-old after one year on the diet. Her energy improved within three weeks of starting the diet. Reading your book was a comfort as I thought I knew lots about allergy and eczema. She had been on the healthiest foods: wheat free, sugar free, chiropractors, Chinese medicine, acupuncture, biocom, skin specialists ...

I was exhausted and pretty fed up when I started learning about failsafe foods. One year on we have a clear picture of what we can have and it is expanding every month. Sulphites, benzoates and salicylates are our main problems, but we stay off any preservatives and colours. Thank you for helping us. Reading your book helped me feel not so alone and laugh at some of the crazy mistakes I made. – *by email, South Australia*

[404] 210: Cough and asthma from benzoates in cough medication (March 2006)

Since the age of two I have seen a pattern develop in my daughter Jaslyn whereby she gets a cough every time she gets a cold. If I treat her with cough medicine the cough persists and becomes chronic, sometimes lasting weeks and causing great distress. In the worst episode two years ago she developed a serous asthma type wheeze with obvious distress and difficulty breathing after drinking soft drink – which she rarely has – and taking cough medicine.

Since then we have discovered that her symptoms and cough are greatly lessened if we do nothing when she has a cold and let it take its course. What we have found for the past two winters is that now if she gets a cold she will get a cough but it will last only for one or two nights if we do not give her any cough medicine. We have a strong family history of allergies and asthma and although I was aware of avoiding sulfites and preservatives in her food I was not aware of the use of benzoates in medicines. I realise now that the benzoate preservatives in cold medicines exacerbate my daughter's symptoms and turn her persistent cough into difficulty in breathing and asthma like symptoms. – Julie Eady

[403] 210: Benzoates are his worst enemy (March 2006)

My 4.5yr old son has been our biggest challenge. All his problems are proving to be food related – it's amazing. His issues are aggression, ODD, poor impulse control, argumentative, continual congestion and ear infections (2 lots of grommets), continual rashes, blotches, sore tummies, burning anus, bloating, bedwetting etc, all of which are being controlled now by diet. We had been giving him decongestants, antihistamines, nasal sprays and antibiotics since the day I stopped breastfeeding him at 6 months ... He was a wild little boy but we've now found out that benzoates are his worst enemy. His nose his dry now and needs no medication. – by email, NSW

[397] Stuttering related to preservatives and salicylates (March 2006)

My 9 year old son started stuttering when he was around 4 years old. He seemed to be sensitive to preservatives especially 211 and I have steered clear of this preservative, but a few weeks ago his stuttering came back in full force, around the same time I had apple juice in the house. He is a big juice addict, and thinking back, has always had juice, either straight or diluted. I have always watched out for the preservatives in juice, and bread, but I now think he is intolerant to salicylates as well. I have changed all of his foods to failsafe foods, and his speech is now good. He has calmed down a bit as well.

[394] 210: Benzoates in medication and stutter (March 2006)

My daughter is allergic to mosquitoes and while we were doing the elimination diet she was badly bitten. Our doctor recommended daily double doses of claratyne liquid. On the second day my daughter started to talk incessantly and stutter a little (this had previously been a problem months ago). Then on day 3 at daycare she became drunkish, socially withdrawn and stopped talking (selective mutism, although not gone, had improved on failsafe). The staff at daycare had been amazed to say the least about her improvement on the diet, so this was obvious. When my husband came home, he picked up the bottle of antihistamine and read the label, to my dismay it contained

sodium benzoate! Well, that went in the bin, we got claratyne tablets, she had a half, and the next day at daycare she was back to normal.

[370] 210: Asthma and benzoates in medication (July 2005)

After hearing about sodium benzoate in asthma medication at your presentation recently I was a bit shocked, and sure enough it was there in my son's medication - standard Ventolin Sugar Free Oral Liquid used for under fives. I talked to my GP about my son's asthma and that the preservative that can cause asthma was in the medication and he was extremely shocked.

My son had suddenly developed asthma when he was two months old, just after his first immunisation shot - although at that age they don't call it asthma. When the asthma finally went away we got the second shot. After that he frequently stopped breathing and was on so much medication we took turns at sitting up with him through the night. Finally we decided that the medication wasn't working constantly enough and took him off it without telling the doctor – and our son slowly got better. He would still have small attacks on occasions so after my husband read your book he decided we should try diet. We noticed there was a difference when we found some sultanas that didn't contain sulphites. We were doing great and had almost six months free of any medication then last week our son developed an ear infection and was put on Amoxil antibiotics and Panadol for pain, both containing sodium benzoate. Within three days he had an asthma episode. After much enquiry I have found that sodium benzoate is in almost every single baby medication including pain medication (often along with artificial colours and flavours. Our pharmacist said that the small amount of sodium benzoate couldn't possibly create a reaction like asthma, it's unheard of, and as sodium benzoate is so effective as a preservative it is the most commonly used preservative in medication today and likely to be in the future. God help us!! – mother from Qld.

[See the article Asthma worsened by benzoate contained in some antiasthmatic drugs, by Balatsinou L and others, Int J Immunopathol Pharmacol, 2004 ;17(2):225-6: "Drug and food additives are known to induce pseudo-allergic reactions such as urticaria, eczema, asthma and rhinitis. These reactions are often under-diagnosed, above all in allergic patients treated with additive containing drugs. On the contrary, attention to the additives present in some drug formulations and foods may often permit more correct diagnosis."]

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