

Diet and nutritional supplements



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As with most chronic conditions, people are often interested in the possible influence of diet. At Tourettes Action we often get asked about any links between diet and Tourette Syndrome or tics.

The variety of questions on this theme includes: taking nutritional supplements, following a specific diet, such as gluten-free, modified Atkins diet (MAD)/ketogenic diet, taking supplements of magnesium or B12 vitamins, allergies, iron levels, possible links to artificial flavourings/colourings and dietary deficiencies.

However, there has been little research into this area and there is a lack of good scientific evidence for any supplements or diets working in reducing tics (Chowdhury and Murphy, 2016).

Some research has found a possible link with caffeine and/or sugar-containing drinks which may make tics worse (coffee and coke) (Müller-Vahl et al, 2008). The researchers say in their conclusion: *'It, therefore, can be speculated that caffeine may further stimulate an already overactive dopaminergic system in TS and thus increases tics. However, from this preliminary data, no further general recommendations regarding special diets and food restrictions can be made'* (p.442).

In their book, Uttom Chowdhury and Tara Murphy suggest *'families certainly report that they see some improvement in tics when certain foods are avoided. As long as the child is following a well-balance diet there should be no problem with excluding some foods to see if this helps'* (p. 80).

Research has found that Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), such as diet alterations, is 'commonly used in children and adults with Tourette Syndrome, and often without the neurologist's knowledge' (p.2015) (Kompolti et al 2009).

Our advice would be to be wary of treatments that are expensive or could be detrimental to the health or comfort of the adult or child with TS or their family. We would always advise discussing this with a trusted and respected health professional before pursuing complementary treatments.

References

Chowdhury, U. and Murphy, T. 2017. Tic Disorders: A Guide for Parents and Professionals. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

Kompolti K., Fan, W. and Leurgans, S. 2009. Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use in Gilles de la Tourette Syndrome. Movement Disorders, Vol. 24, No. 13, 2009, pp. 2015 –2019

Müller-Vahl, K. Buddensiek, N., Geomelas, M. and Emrich, H. 2008. The influence of different food and drink on tics in Tourette syndrome. Acta Pædiatrica, 97, pp. 442–446.

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