



Nourishing Hope

Using Food and Nutrition to Improve Autism & ADHD



How to Begin & Succeed at a Special Diet

By Julie Matthews, Certified Nutrition Consultant

Parents of children with autism and ADHD are learning that making particular food choices can help their son or daughter become healthier and improve mood, learning, and behavior.

Nutrient deficiencies, food sensitivities and intolerances are common in children with autism, ADHD, and other childhood conditions. That's why a special diet and supplementation are often necessary.

Special diets are customizable food-focused strategies. Making the change from *not* considering the impact of food intake (standard American diet) to *giving* specialized attention (nutrition centered diet) is the key to promoting systemic healing. This is especially true for children with impaired digestive and immune systems (common in illnesses such as autism, asthma, allergies and ADHD).

When nourishing hope, you are removing foods that are not tolerated and boosting required nutrition/nutrient levels. Parents tell me the most significant benefits come from a multi-faceted plan that balances

physician recommended approaches, proper supplementation, and nutrition-centered special diets.

Special healing diets can help children improve in many ways. When diets are correctly implemented, positive changes and improvements are often seen in nutrient status, gastrointestinal problems, language, learning, focus, attention, eye contact, behavior, sleep difficulties, toilet training, and skin rashes/eczema. Since every child is unique, each child benefits from a BioIndividual Nutrition™ approach and improvements will vary. Parents from around the world are beginning to share their stories of healing.

In Article 1 of this *Get Started Guide*, I explained the scientific rationale for giving specialized attention to children's diet and nutrition intake. And in Article 2, I gave an overview of various diet options known to be helpful, and explained core nutritious diet fundamentals. And in Article 3, I shared factors affecting picky eaters and strategies for helping them too.

Now let's explore *How to Begin and Succeed at a Special Diet*.

Understanding how to *begin* and then *progress* with special diet implementation will greatly increase your effectiveness.

First, I'll briefly review some of the special diets, then I will share simple steps for implementing any diet, and I will conclude with some meal ideas and recipes.

The removal of gluten and casein (GFCF diet), and the removal of grains and sugars (SCD/GAPS/Paleo) are two of the most common initial dietary recommendations.

Many parents begin with the GFCF diet - it's easiest - and children on the autism spectrum are often sensitive to gluten and casein, the proteins found in wheat and milk. These food intolerances are known to impact body and brain function. Even if a child has tested negative for a food allergy, studies and parent stories indicate that removal of gluten and casein can help physical and cognitive conditions in children in notable ways.

Also, diets that address underlying biochemistry and food intolerances

such as low oxalate and low salicylate diets, can be very helpful. See article 2 “*Nutrition and Diets That Help*” and *Nourishing Hope for Autism* for more on choosing a special diet.

Once you have determined a dietary direction, proper implementation of the diet is key. Having a plan helps mom be prepared, your child ease into it, and helps everyone succeed.

STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DIET IMPLEMENTATION:

1. **Get Educated** on the special diet. Learn about the omissions and substitutes, additional foods they include, and meal ideas compliant with the food list.
2. **Experiment** – Discover choices your child likes. Before removing any foods from the diet, identify new GFCF (or other diet) alternatives. This way you will already have options they’ll eat – this will smooth their transition.
3. **Create a meal plan.** Develop a list of diet compliant foods and snacks your child will eat or that you would like to try making. Create a list of choices for meals and snacks.
4. **Shop** for special diet ingredients and foods according to your meal plan and purchase diet compliant flours, milks, and other cooking staples or ingredients to make the basics. Keeping your shelves stocked allows you to stay on track and always have food on hand when your kids are hungry.
5. **Begin diet implementation.** Each diet will have its own dietary implementation guidelines. Some diets have very specific rules and introductory phases: See individual diets (SCD, GAPS, Low oxalate, and others) for details. When beginning GFCF, parents often start by eliminating one group at a time: 1) Start by removing casein from the diet—for two weeks, then, 2) Remove gluten as well, and continue both (gluten-free and casein-free) for three to six months.
6. **Keep a journal** of changes in your child’s diet and daily condition/symptoms. This will help you track the diet results, and provide you

SOURCES OF GLUTEN TO AVOID

Gluten grains

- Wheat
- Rye
- Barley
- Spelt
- Kamut
- Triticale
- Oats (commercial) – GF oats are available

Gluten containing ingredients and foods

- Semolina
- Malt
- Hydrolyzed Vegetable Proteins *
- Dextrin and maltodextrin *
- Artificial flavors & coloring *
- “Spices” *
- Soy sauce (unless wheat-free) *
- Potato chips/fries *
- Sauces and gravies *
- Bologna and hot dogs *

may contain gluten, unless specified gluten-free

SOURCES OF CASEIN TO AVOID

Casein is found in all animal milk products (cow, goat, sheep milk, etc)

- Milk
- Cheese
- Yogurt and kefir
- Butter
- Cream, ice cream, and sour cream
- Whey

Casein containing ingredients and foods

- Milk chocolate
- Sherbet
- Galactose
- Casein, Caseinate
- Lactose in seasoning
- Lactalbumin, as natural flavor
- Artificial butter flavor
- Cool Whip
- Lactic acid *
- Canned tuna *
- Seasoned potato chips *
- Hot dogs and bologna (may contain) *

* May contain casein

something to look back on and share with members of your support team for necessary guidance.

Diet Details and Meal Planning – for GFCF and Grain-Free Diets

On the GFCF diet, gluten, the protein in wheat (as well as other grains including rye, barley, spelt, kamut, and commercial oats), and casein, (the protein in dairy), are removed from the child’s diet. These proteins have been found to be problematic for many children on the autism spectrum, eating foods containing them can affect their body’s physical and cognitive functions. Eliminating those foods (and ingredients containing these food proteins) from your child’s diet and choosing healthier alternatives aids healing. Parents report that as children feel better, they also have better attention and learning skills because digestive disturbances and hyperactivity are minimized. Soy is also broken down by the

same enzyme as gluten and casein, so soy is good to avoid as well when doing a GFCF diet.

In addition to the GFCF diet, there are several grain-free and starch-free diets, all with their own set of slightly different foods and rules: Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD), Gut and Psychology Syndrome (GAPS) Diet, and Paleo Diet.

For SCD/GAPS, starches and disaccharides are removed. These substances are poorly digested by children whose bodies lack carbohydrate-digesting enzymes and/or have an inflamed digestive system. When ingested, these starches/sugars that are not properly broken down can feed yeast and bacteria, and create greater inflammation and digestive problems. Paleo is also grain-free, but doesn’t allow any beans (and sometimes includes sweet potatoes). Grain-free diets are often helpful for severe digestive conditions and when GFCF alone is not enough.



NOTE ON GHEE

Ghee is made from butter, but because the milk solids are removed it should be casein-free. However, because all of the solids might not be completely removed, children with serious dairy allergies should not eat ghee. Since it's difficult to know if you've removed all of the casein when making ghee at home, it's best to start with a ghee that is tested and certified casein-free (if possible) so you can feel more confident that the casein has been removed and whether it's tolerated. I find that most of my casein-free clients can use ghee without a problem, and because ghee is very nutritious many casein-free people enjoy including it in their diet.

Here are further details and resources on how to implement these diets. GFCF and SCD have very different underlying principles, and they are recommended for particular circumstances and needs, so dietary rules and implementation are specific to each diet. Confer with your pediatrician and nutritionist as you are implementing a special diet to ensure proper nutrition.

GFCF

When going gluten-free and casein-free you need to beware of hidden sources—gluten or casein can be an ingredient within some processed foods, and not be disclosed. With a few pointers it's possible to ensure you are fully avoiding these substances.

It is pretty easy to substitute your child's favorite foods with gluten-free options—GF waffles, GF pancakes, GF muffins, GF pasta are all readily available in stores. Organic GFCF hotdogs and chicken nuggets are also pretty close to the original gluten containing versions, and are easy to substitute. At the beginning, these “transition foods” are helpful, but remember, children do not need “kids foods” and you can create a healthier diet by avoiding processed products.

Breads are more difficult to substitute, since gluten's texture makes bread more challenging to mimic with gluten-free flours. As you try different brands of GFCF bread, consider making bread of your own. Gluten-free breads, with and without yeast, taste much better and have a fresher texture when made at home. You can make these homemade breads with or without a bread maker or any special equipment.

Many aspects of going casein-free are also easy to change: butter substitutes

like ghee (see box) and coconut oil are delicious, healthy, and available in most health food stores. Regular cow's milk can be slowly diluted over time with dairy-free milk. Coconut yogurt is dairy-free and soy-free, casein-free puddings and ice creams are also nearly indistinguishable from their dairy versions.

Mac and cheese can be made fairly easily without any cheese substitute at all. Melted cheese such as on GF pizza is harder to mimic because of its gooey texture. Fortunately, there are a few products that are free of casein and caseinate, as well as soy-free, that can be used when you simply must have pizza!

Remember to add a calcium supplement and other nutritional supplementation to ensure nutrient needs are met. Digestive enzymes with DPP-IV can help breakdown gluten, casein, and soy in case of accidental infraction at a restaurant, or as a first step in implementing a GFCF diet.

breakfast already contains fat, carbohydrate, and protein together such as French toast or a smoothie.

- Eggs, scrambled eggs, an omelet, any style without milk
- Breakfast sausage. Store bought (with no nitrates/ites) or simply a homemade meat patty
- Bacon (no nitrates/ites)
- GFCF waffle or pancake (most frozen brands contain soy)
- GFCF toast with nut butter and/or butter substitute
- Gluten-free oatmeal or hot cereal
- French toast (GF bread)
- Organic Fruit
- Organic Fruit Smoothie (See Green Smoothie recipe)

Lunch/Dinner - Include a protein, vegetable, some fat, and a starch (the starch is optional and is eliminated on certain diets). Have hot leftover dinner for lunch by using a Thermos.

- Grass-fed/pastured Protein
 - Meatballs - Ground beef, buffalo, lamb or any meat
 - Burger - Ground chicken, beef, turkey, or other meat
 - GFCF, nitrate/ite-free hotdog or sausage
 - Homemade GF chicken nuggets
 - Roasted chicken
 - Chicken Pancakes (see recipe)
- Organic Vegetables
 - Steamed or boiled vegetables with coconut oil melted on top
 - Stir-fry vegetables
 - Salad or carrot sticks
 - Kale Chips (see recipe)
 - Raw sauerkraut
- Organic Fruit
 - Fresh fruit
 - Cooked into a sauce like apple sauce or pear sauce
- Starch
 - GF pasta



Get our GFCF Success Guide online at NourishingHope.com/GFCFsuccess

GFCF MEAL IDEAS

Breakfast. Always try to serve a portion of protein such as eggs or sausage at breakfast. Try two or three of these ideas together such as: scrambled eggs, with bacon and a piece of fruit—unless

- o Sweet potato or potato fries
- o Rice or quinoa
- o GF crackers or bread
- Additional lunch and dinner ideas
 - o GF sandwich w/lunch meat
 - o GF sandwich with sunflower seed butter and jelly (a peanut/nut-free PB&J)
 - o Stews & soups – Pureed or broth soup
 - o Casseroles

Snacks

- Chicken nuggets or chicken pancakes
- Celery or apple with nut butter
- Vegetables with hummus
- Potato chips or other chips (ideally with guacamole or other healthy dip)
- Carrot chips
- Vegetable latkes with apple sauce on top
- Smoothie (or frozen into popsicles)
- Vegetable juice (fresh made)
- GF French toast strips with coconut oil and a bit of salt (not sweet if possible)
- Fruit or apple/pear sauce
- Black olives & dill pickles
- Turkey rollups
- Meatballs (with dipping sauce)

GRAIN-FREE DIETS

Specific Carbohydrate Diet Gut & Psychology Syndrome (GAPS) Paleo Diet

There are a number of grain-free diets that have slightly different foods and rules. SCD/GAPS Diets share the same food lists (for the most part) - they eliminate all grains, as well as other starches like corn and potatoes, although they allow certain beans. Paleo also avoids all grains, and all beans, while allowing small amounts of sweet potatoes and other tubers.

These diets allow carbohydrates, such as all non-starchy vegetables including broccoli, zucchini, green beans, and even winter squash. They also allow meat, eggs, nuts/seeds, fruit, and oils.

SCD and GAPS (and Paleo for that matter) are not intended as “low carbohydrate” diets, they are “specific

FOODS TO AVOID ON GRAIN-FREE DIETS

- No grains
- No corn
- No products made from grains or starches (rice or potato milk)
- No white or sweet potatoes (allowed on Paleo not SCD/GAPS)
- No soy products
- Certain beans are not allowed: garbanzo/chick peas, black-eyed peas, butter beans, fava beans, mung beans, pinto beans (No beans on Paleo)
- No bean flours
- No molasses
- No corn syrup
- No maple syrup
- No artificial sweeteners (including sucralose or Splenda)
- No garlic and onion powder
- No pasta
- No cornstarch, arrowroot powder, tapioca, agar-agar or carrageenan
- No pectin in making jellies and jams
- No baking powder
- Many supplements are not allowed because of non-compliant fillers

ALLOWABLE FOODS ON GRAIN-FREE DIET

- Meat
- Eggs
- Non-starchy vegetables
- Fruit and 100% fruit juice not from concentrate
- Nuts
- Honey
- Nut milk
- Nut flours
- Coconut flour
- Oils
- Spices (avoid blends with gluten)
- Some beans: Dried white/navy beans and lentils (on GAPS), black beans, split peas, lima bean. (No beans on Paleo)



carbohydrate” diets. Carbohydrates are important for children, so it is important to include sources of carbohydrate that are allowed on this diet, such as fruits, vegetables, certain beans and nuts, and yogurt (if consumed). While dairy is technically allowed on SCD, this diet was not originally developed for children with autism who have so many challenges with dairy. Most children will begin this diet without casein, and then add it back later if tolerated. It is important to work with a nutrition professional to make sure nutritional needs are met while following SCD.

Because there are many starches, thickeners, and non-compliant sugars in store bought foods such as sausage, nut milks, and apple sauce, parents following SCD often prepare more foods from scratch (than GFCF). However, once you get the hang of it, it is fairly easy to do—and the foods are more flavorful with more natural enzymes, nu-

trients, and higher quality ingredients than their prepared-food counterparts.

Grain-Free Meal Ideas

Grain-Free Breakfast - Serve some vegetables (or carbohydrate) with meals, including breakfast. Try two or three of these ideas together and include a protein and carbohydrate.

- Eggs: scrambled, an omelet, any style without milk
- Breakfast sausage, a homemade meat patty
- Chicken pancake (grain-free and nut-free)
- Banana pancake (nut-free)
- Nut butter pancake or muffin
- Butternut squash hash browns
- Sautéed kale or kale chips
- Fruit
- Fruit Smoothie: Homemade nut/coconut milk, frozen/fresh fruit such as blueberries, bananas, peaches, and pear, honey, 1 T melted coconut oil, non-dairy yogurt

Grain-Free Lunch/Dinner - Include a protein, some fat, vegetable and other allowed carbohydrate. Have hot left-over dinner for lunch (use Thermos).

- Grass-fed/Pastured Protein
 - Meatballs - Ground beef, lamb or any meat with pureed vegetables
 - Burger without bun
 - Homemade GF chicken nuggets (with nut-flour)
 - Any roasted chicken or meat
 - Stews & soups – Pureed or broth
- Organic Vegetables/carbohydrate
 - Squash fries
 - Raw sauerkraut
 - Potato-free vegetable latkes
 - Cauliflower mashed “potatoes” or “rice”
 - Steamed or boiled vegetables with coconut oil melted on top
 - Bean burger (not on Paleo)
- Organic Fruit/carbohydrate
 - Fruit cooked into a sauce like apple sauce or pear sauce
 - Fresh fruit

Grain-Free Snacks

- Chicken pancakes
- Celery or apple with nut butter
- Vegetables with homemade white bean hummus
- Carrot chips with guacamole
- Vegetable latkes with apple sauce
- Kale chips
- Smoothie (or frozen into popsicles)
- Vegetable juice (fresh made)
- Fruit or apple/pear sauce

YOU HAVE ALREADY BEGUN

Simply by reading this *Get Started Guide*, you have begun. Continue researching, asking questions, working with your child’s doctor, and trying some healthy recipes.

These implementation basics will help you, and I’ve included some recipes from my Cooking Course, *Cooking to Heal*. (see below)

As you proceed, I suggest you have my book *Nourishing Hope for Autism*, as well as *Cooking To Heal* and the *Nourishing Hope Food Pyramid*. I’ve put over ten years research and clinical experience into these tools and have designed them especially to support your success.

There is no question that foods and nutrients can impact the symptoms of autism - hyperactivity, inattentiveness, learning, and behavior. As a parent or clinician, the foods and substances you recommend and feed to children matter greatly.

Making the most informed and helpful diet and nutrition choices for our children while believing in the possibility of a brighter future is the essence of nourishing hope.

Chicken Pancakes

GF/CF/ SCD/GAPS/LOD/BED, Nut-Free

- 1 chicken breast precooked (season as desired while boiling)
- 3 eggs
- ½ teaspoon salt

Blend ingredients together in food processor until completely smooth. Mixture will look like thick pancake batter.

Add a dollop of batter to hot, greased pan and cook like a pancake. Batter may need to be spread out into a pancake shape so it's not too thick.



Kale Chips

GF/CF/ SCD/GAPS/LOD/BED/FG, Egg-Free/Nut-Free

You can also use other greens such as arugula (rocket), dandelion greens, mustard greens or others. These kale chips are a medium oxalate food, that have a place in most low oxalate diets.

Ingredients

- Bunch of Kale
- Olive oil
- Salt
- Herbs and spices as desired (smoked paprika/capsicum, cayenne, rosemary or any)

Directions

Rinse kale leaves and dry. Remove stem of kale. Rub with olive oil. Season with salt and any other herbs you'd like.

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Place stalks directly on oven rack and cook for 10-15 minutes. Watch closely so they don't burn. Chips should be green and crispy, not browned – browned is burnt.



Green Smoothie

GF/CF/SCD/GAPS/LOD

Because of kale and these other low and medium oxalate ingredients, you can enjoy this green smoothie as part of a low oxalate diet. Use lacinato kale for lowest oxalates.

Ingredients

- 1 cup mango (fresh or frozen)
- 1/2 cup berries (fresh or frozen)
- 1 banana
- 1/2 avocado
- 5 kale leaves, destemmed (about one cup of kale)
- 12 oz of water, or fresh fruit or vegetable juice
- 2 dates (optional if the berries are on the sour side)

Directions

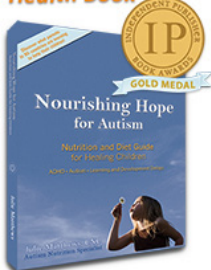
Blend together in a blender and serve.



ABOUT JULIE MATTHEWS

Julie Matthews is an internationally respected Certified Nutrition Consultant specializing in autism spectrum disorders. She is an expert in applying food, nutrition, and diet to aid digestive health and systemic healing. Her guidance and support tools stem from extensive research and applied clinical experience. Julie supports parents of children with autism from around the world and collaborates with pediatricians, family doctors, and researchers. She educates at the leading biomedical autism conferences, writes for varied publications, and has a private nutrition practice in San Francisco, California.

Most Progressive Health Book



NOURISHING HOPE FOR AUTISM

Autism diet intervention guide for parents and professionals. Provides the scientific WHY and HOW various diets help children find relief from the symptoms of autism and ADHD. Contains step-by-step nutrition guide that stems from extensive clinical experience and research.



COOKING TO HEAL

Inspiring 4 hour LIVE nutrition and cooking class (DVD) – with Special Diet Cookbook (diet compliant recipes.) Learn to follow any special diet; how to provide good nutrition, address food restrictions and sensitivities, and still create meals families (and picky eaters) will love.