



You can drink yourself calmer if you have ADHD, say the experts

With ADHD on the rise, parents often blame the illness on colourings and preservatives like those in red cordial. But will they really make children hyperactive?

"It depends on the brand of cordial, so check labels," Julie Eady, director of consumer group Additive Alert, explains. "Some use 120 as a colouring. This is cochineal and has very few reactions. But some use 124 and 129, and these show reactions."



These reactions were recently documented in a large UK study which found even normal, healthy children showed hyperactive symptoms after drinking beverages that contained common food colourings: 102, 104, 110, 122, 124 and 129. The UK Food Standards Authority has since called on food manufacturers to voluntarily phase these colourings out by 2009, although they are still in use in Australia.

There's also plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest red cordial has a similarly hypo effect on Australian kids.

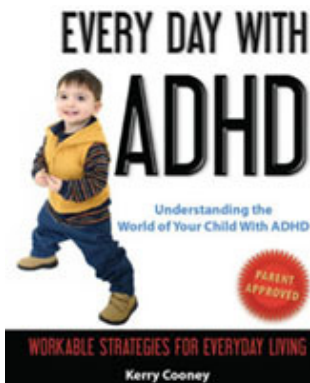
"In my teaching experience we'd be careful about giving red cordial," Professor Kay Margetts, Assoc Professor in Early Childhood Studies at the University of Melbourne, explains.

"When you have parties with red drinks some kids become more hyperactive." Although it doesn't affect every child.

"It depends on the strength (of the mix) and how each child reacts," she says. "Some kids are more prone to tummy pains or headaches with cola, while other kids will say they don't want orange-flavoured soft drinks because 'they make me sick'."

Other experts also agree. "A child who is already showing potential signs of ADHD may have their symptoms worsened by artificial colourings," Professor Alasdair Vance, Professor Of Child Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne explains.

And ADHD educator Kerry Cooney points out that preservatives are not just in cordials and juices, but also in processed lollies and other junk foods, which should be avoided.



"Aim to give the ADHD child as many natural, unprocessed foods as possible. Fish oil supplements also seem to help as does zinc. And water is the safest, healthiest drink. If you're worried about preservatives make this the main drink of the house and avoid buying coloured drinks in the first place. It's easier to say no once at the supermarket than five times at home."

Kerry's book *Every Day With ADHD* is available for \$32.95 at good book stores.

Your say

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