

# HEALTH REPORT

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## DIETARY CHANGES MAY IMPROVE AUTISTIC BEHAVIOR

Autistic children in Australia are showing signs of improvement — but it isn't through drug regimens or long-term behavioral therapy.

Some Australian doctors have altered their treatment to include special diets and nutritional supplements; treating autism as a physical disorder, rather than just a behavioral disorder. As a result, one child — a non-verbal five-year-old, suddenly started talking and is now in public school.

U.S. and British researchers suggest autism is linked to physical problems, such as gut disorders. Results of a colonoscopy study of 110 autistic children showed 97% had signs of intestinal disorders.

Harvard University researchers are also investigating this potential link. Using 500 gastrointestinal endoscopies with biopsies, researchers found more than 50% of autistic children had treatable gut disorders (esophagitis, to gastritis and enterocolitis) — which could mean if the gut is healed, the autism may improve.

Sunderland University (Britain) is testing their protocol for treating autism — introducing the child to a dairy-free and gluten-free diet; testing for food allergies and eliminating problem-causing foods; testing for vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and supplementing as needed; testing stools for parasitic organisms (yeast, bacteria) — so deficiencies are handled and to heal the gut so the body can better absorb nutrients.

The Sunderland Protocol is being tested by Sydney pediatrician Dr. Antony Underwood, who claims some of his patients have recovered from autism. The children are now attending standard schools, making friends, and communicating at levels respective to their ages.

According to Underwood, autistic children often have very high copper levels, multiple food allergies, and yeast infections of the gut — all of which respond to elimination diets and anti-fungal medications.

According to Gary Deed, a general practitioner who also utilizes this protocol, most parents accept that they are not looking for 100% recovery, but better ability to self-manage and develop independent living skills. “To get a child to speak might be as big a milestone for one as it is to finally get toilet-training complete in a seven to nine-year-old.”

Within two months of using the Sunderland protocol, the five-year-old, who had been non-verbal, a fussy eater, and felt no pain, prior to the dietary changes, was removed from antibiotics, his pain threshold was normal, and he ate a wider variety of foods. After two years, he no longer needed speech or occupational therapy, he speaks normally for his age, and attends public school.

*SOURCE: Australia, Herald Sun, [www.heraldsun.news.com.au](http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au), February 22, 2003.*