

How a Low Salicylate Diet Can Improve Behavior in Children

Julie Matthews, CNC



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Rebekah Kelley: Welcome to the Humanized podcast, all about personalizing your health. I am your host, Rebekah Kelley, and today we'll be discussing, "How a Low Salicylate Diet Can Improve Behavior In Children," with Julie Matthews. And before I introduce Julie, I want to remind everyone to subscribe, to get all of our variety of casts and audio, video and transcription at HumanizeHealth.com. I'd also like to thank our lead sponsor Village Green Apothecary at MyVillageGreen.com.

Our special guest, Julie Matthews, will discuss the low salicylate diet and how salicylates can result in behavioral issues, sleep problems and more for those with sulfation issues. Julie Matthews is a certified nutrition consultant and published researcher specializing in complex neurological, digestive and immune conditions, most notably autism. She is the author of the award-winning book, *Nourishing Hope for Autism*, and co-author of a study, "Providing Efficacy of Nutrition and Dietary Intervention for Autism," published in the peer reviewed journal, *Nutrients*. Julie's approach is based on the personalized nutrition needs of every person and stems from her 20 years of clinical nutrition experience and research. Her methodology of BioIndividual Nutrition helps individuals and practitioners who work with a wide range of disorders for adults and children improve health and healing.

Julie, thank you so much for being here.

Julie Matthews: Thanks Rebekah. I'm glad to be here.

Rebekah Kelley: So, how did you first start using the low – and I'm having a hard time with this word – salicylate diet in your nutrition practice? What foods are high in salicylates?

Julie Matthews: Yes. So, it is a tricky one. I say it "sa-li-cy-late," and it is confusing too, because salicylic acid, where it's sort of derived from, is also pronounced a little slightly differently. So, salicylates. But we know what you're talking about, so it's all good.

My specialty is kids with ADHD and autism. A low salicylate diet has actually been used for people with ADHD since the 1970s with Dr. Ben Feingold. It's a really helpful diet when you have hyperactivity and attentiveness, things like that. Particularly I find it really great with hyperactivity. Also aggression, sleep issues, irritability, red cheeks, red ears, difficulty kind of calming down, slowing down at night. So, those are some of the places that I see it most helpful.

So it first came about in my work when I was working with kids and just realizing how many of them have this underlying biochemistry that causes them to have issues with these food compounds. And we can go into more about what they are and where

they're found, but that's how I came about it – it's been actually used for a really long time. And I see such amazing results in my practice, something so simple, making such a dramatic difference. I mean, a child with autism, with severe aggression, every single day aggression going to almost no aggression after removing some of these foods. I mean, it's a really life-changing thing and it's such a simple change, if that's what's going on for somebody.

Rebekah Kelley: If you mentioned, I missed it – but what foods are high in salicylates?

Julie Matthews: Salicylates are found in a lot of healthy foods. So this is again, something that makes it a little bit tricky. You know, it really is. We don't want to just remove all of these foods unless somebody's reacting. And so these "polyphenol rich foods" – and I say that in quotes because salicylates are a type of phenol. So when we look at these, a lot of people are familiar with polyphenol foods. They're things like apples and grapes and turmeric and cinnamon, and all of these really great fruits and vegetables and herbs and spices that are wonderfully anti-inflammatory and nutrient dense and all this great stuff. But if you are reacting to them, then they can create some biochemical chaos for those people that don't process them well.

Rebekah Kelley: And what does that biochemical chaos look like? What are those symptoms that are caused by these salicylates?

Julie Matthews: Yeah, so it can, even though they're anti-inflammatory foods, it actually can create inflammation. Some people actually get hive-like symptoms, but they don't have an allergy to the food. They're having this inflammatory reaction. It can create digestive disturbances. But one of the big things I see is behavior and cognitive challenges associated. So, irritability. Some of those things I mentioned earlier that are some of the big ones for me – irritability, aggression, hyperactivity, sleeping challenges. But also the sort of classic red cheeks and red ears, they tend to do that. Now people will say, well, my child doesn't have red cheeks or red ears. You don't have to have all of these symptoms. You might just have a few of them. But red cheeks, red ears and hyperactivity are kind of some of the most common classic symptoms that I see, particularly in kids. Now, adults can get reactions as well, but adults' reactions might look a little different. So they might not have bedwetting, but they might have urinary frequency or something, or urgency, or something like that. So it might look different.

Rebekah Kelley: Wow. So what symptoms are caused by salicylates and also why do people have salicylates intolerance? How does that translate?

Julie Matthews: So the reason for these symptoms and this salicylate intolerance, I mean, it can be, obviously, a little different for different people, but it's often a challenge with sulfation chemistry. And so we don't have to go into all of that, but maybe some of your listeners have heard of methylation. We need methylation for transsulfuration, for then sulfation – there's like this whole, basically, cascade of biochemical processes. And sulfation is one of them that actually is an interesting marker for chronic disease. So Rosemary Waring and Margaret Moss did this study looking at and postulating that. Poor sulfation is a marker in all chronic disease. And so they found it not only to be an issue in autism and ADHD, but depression, IBS, all sorts of neurological conditions, lupus. So really, really interesting. When we don't have... Sulfation is required to process salicylates. So if sulfation is inadequate, then we can get this issue. And we don't have, necessarily, probably the ability to go into all of it, but people can always... I talk a lot about this. People can find out more. There are various reasons you might either be low in the building blocks of that, or be depleting that. And then, there are multiple ways to address it, but one of them that can provide some immediate relief is to look at a low salicylate diet.

Rebekah Kelley: So when you personalize a diet with your bioindividual nutrition approach, where does the low salicylate diet fit into this?

Julie Matthews: So I think in a way, you know, since everything is individual, it will depend on the person. But I find that if I'm also looking at kids with behavioral challenges, this comes up pretty often for them because of the research we know about their underlying biochemistry. So I would say a vast majority of my clients with ADHD and autism, I would add this principle to their personalized nutrition plan because I find it to be so helpful for them. Obviously, I don't apply it across the board cause not everybody... but that's something that's going to be more common for them.

So I guess the way that I look at personalizing a diet is that I try to stick with some solid, good nutrition principles. Getting enough adequate protein, good quality grass-fed protein, getting some good quality vegetables, getting good fats for the brain. And then the types of foods might vary. So you might avoid certain high salicylate vegetables and certain high salicylate fruits, and you might focus on some of the other foods. So that's kind of how I would bring in a salicylates, or a low salicylates diet into a bioindividual nutrition approach.

Rebekah Kelley: Wonderful. Thanks, Julie, those are really valuable insights. Julie Matthews can be found at www.NourishingHope.com. Let me remind you to subscribe and get access to all Humanized videos, podcasts and transcriptions from all of our thought leaders on personalized health at HumanizedHealth.com.