

Newest Feingold article has many boo-boos

By: Jane Hersey

Jane first met Dr. Feingold in 1974 and worked with him in her later roles as President of the Feingold Association, then Executive Director and more recently as National Director. During those years, she helped countless families achieve success with the diet and she is the author of two books and numerous articles on the topic.

The recent article by dietitian Katey Davidson, “Does the Feingold Diet Work for ADHD?,” uses partial truths, false statements and factual mistakes to arrive at the conclusion that the Feingold Diet is difficult, risky and ineffective.

1. Using information from Dr. Feingold’s 1975 book, the article states, “Feingold recommended making all meals from scratch so that your child doesn’t accidentally eat forbidden ingredients.”

But much has changed since 1975! Feingold support groups, formed by parents and professionals, saw the need for a list of brand name foods that would be suitable. Today, that list includes thousands of products that have been researched and are acceptable for use. (The Feingold *Fast Food Guide* even includes Big Macs and Coca-Cola!)

Another major shift during the years since 1975 is that natural foods are so much easier to find. Major supermarkets have their own line of natural products, and just about any food is available at stores like Whole Foods or online.

2. Another misstatement is, “...food labels are highly regulated and monitored for accuracy.”

Sadly, this isn’t so. Not only are labels often inaccurate, they do not need to disclose the hidden additives such as BHT in the shortening, vitamin fortification or packaging.

3. “Most of the diet’s stipulations are intended to be followed for life.”

The diet is a test to help identify foods or additives that are not well tolerated. People choose to continue to eliminate synthetic additives for many reasons. They may find that by avoiding certain additives they no longer suffer from various health or behavior problems. They

understand that many of the additives are carcinogens and have been shown to cause nerve damage and respiratory problems. The additive-free foods taste better. Many resent the fact that the same companies that add petroleum-based dyes to foods sold in the U.S. use natural colorings in the European versions.

4. "Intentionally restricting your child's nutrient intake brings us many ethical and medical concerns...."

Synthetic food additives are not "nutrients," although this is not clear in the article. As for the foods referred to as "salicylates," Dr. Feingold used the time-honored approach of an elimination diet: a suspected food is temporarily removed and then reintroduced to see if there is any negative reaction.

Many people have no problem eating salicylates, and others (children especially) can eat all the salicylate foods as long as they don't overdo them.

Even those who are sensitive to one or more of the salicylate foods have good alternatives. Orange is a salicylate known for its high vitamin C content, but watermelon and broccoli are very good sources too.

5. In the article the list of dyes that are excluded include Red No. 2, but it was banned back in the 1970s.
6. The article claims "artificial flavor such as vanilla" is not allowed. But it should read that "vanillin" is eliminated, not vanilla.

When it comes to listing salicylate foods the Feingold Diet removes, the information on fruits is good, but the vegetable list is bizarre.

7. The author believes (incorrectly) these are salicylate vegetables: alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, chicory, eggplant, endive, okra, radishes, squash, sweet potatoes, spinach, watercress, zucchini.
8. Under "nuts and seeds" the only food on the Feingold salicylate list is almonds. However, the author claims the diet also removes "chestnuts and other nuts and seeds."
9. Curiously, "processed crackers" are also listed here.

10. The Feingold Diet considers cloves and pepper-based spices such as paprika and cayenne pepper to be salicylates. The author adds the misinformation that the following are also salicylates: allspice, anise seeds, cinnamon, curry, cumin, dill, ginger, mustard, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, thyme and turmeric.
11. “Fruit juices” are on the article’s salicylate list even though there are non-salicylate choices such as pineapple juice, pear juice, lemonade, etc.
12. The article states (incorrectly) that jams and jellies are not permitted at the start of the diet.

The claim that studies do not support the Feingold Diet is not based upon the facts, and the implication that the diet is supported only by parents and criticized by the medical community is also untrue.

There are many studies that support the diet/ADHD link. Especially important are the two British studies (Bateman 2004 and McCann 2007) that led to the European Union requiring warning labels on foods that contain synthetic dyes.

To learn what the Feingold Diet *really* is, go to www.feingold.org.