

Get organised for low additive eating



Home Economist and Queensland's Additive Alert Community Talks Presenter Louise D'Allura shares **four** tips to make low additive eating easy!

Are you worried about what you're feeding your family? Don't worry - you're not alone! Research shows 46% of Australians are trying to avoid food additives when they shop, and for good reason. According to Additive Alert, we are unwittingly consuming 5kg of food additives each year, there are over 60 food additives known to trigger or exacerbate asthma attacks in sufferers, and there are at least 15 additives in foods prohibited in foods for infants and young children that are in foods still commonly eaten by children!

On the plus side, not all additives are bad! The trick is to know which food additives are worth avoiding. Now if you're thinking that food additives isn't an issue for you because you make a lot of items from scratch, even the most savvy supermarket shoppers are being caught out by the very few packaged foods they eat for example, sandwich wraps! You don't want to undermine your goal of raising healthy kids in a happy and calm household!

1. Learn to read labels

As soon as you pick up a packet – ignore all the claims on the front! Even if they say 'contains no artificial colours or MSG'! MSG (monosodium glutamate or 621) is only one of many flavour enhancers that can cause reactions. Anecdotally we know that 'natural' colours, such as 160b (Annatto) and Carmines/ Cochineal (120) can cause behavioural problems in kids too.

So, as soon as you pick up a packet go straight to the ingredient list!!! Do the ingredients look familiar and what you'd expect if you made it from scratch? Take a look at any numbers, or words you don't recognise. Food additives can be listed by the function they perform with a number, or by their name, so Colour (160b)/ (E160b) or as Annatto. There is a growing trend to write the 'name' of a food additive because the food industry knows we're avoiding 'the numbers' and Annatto sounds much friendlier!

2. Know what you're trying to avoid and why.

This list below notes that additives that are worth avoiding as a starting point. This list from Additive Alert includes the worst additives that most people want to avoid as they are linked to adverse health problems.

If there are specific issues you want to manage, for example hyperactivity/ hypersensitivity, asthma or if you have young children, there may be other additives you wish to include on your list. Additive Alert: Your Guide to Safer Shopping has some suggestions in Appendix 1.

If you're not sure where to start – just use the list here as a starting point!

Colours: 102 (Tartrazine), 104 (Quinoline Yellow), 110 (Sunset Yellow FCF), 122 (Azorubine or Carmosine), 123 (Amaranth), 124 (Ponceau 4R), 127 (Erythrosine), 129 (Allura Red AC), 132 (Indigotine), 133 (Brilliant Blue), 142 (Green S), 151 (Brilliant Black), 153 (Carbon Black), 155 (Brown HT), 160b (Annatto), 173 (Aluminium), 174 (Silver), 175 (Gold)

Preservatives: 211 (Sodium Benzoate), 212 (Potassium Benzoate), 213 (Calcium Benzoate), 216 (Propylparaben), 218 (Methylparaben), 249 (Potassium Nitrite), 250 (Sodium Nitrite), 251 (Sodium Nitrate), 280 (Propionic Acid), 281 (Sodium Propionate), 282 (Calcium Propionate)

Antioxidants: 310 (Propyl gallate), 311 (Octyl gallate), 312 (Dodecyl gallate), 319 (Tert-Butylhydroquinone TBHQ), 320 (Butylated hydroxyanisole BHA), 321 (Butylated hydroxytoluene BHT)

Gums: 407 (Carrageenan), 407A Processed eucheuma seaweed), 466 (Sodium carboxymethylcellulose)

Flavour enhancer: 621 (Monosodium L-glutamate MSG), 627 (Disodium 5'-guanylate), 631 (Disodium 5'-inosinate), 635 (Disodium 5'-ribonucleotides), 637 (Ethyl maltol)

Others: 900 (Polydimethylsiloxane), 914 (oxidized polyethylene), 943 (a-butane, b-isobutane), 944 (propane), 950 (Acesulphame potassium), 951 (Aspartame), 952 (Calcium cyclamate, sodium cyclamate), 954 (saccharin or calcium/sodium/potassium saccharin), 955 (sucralose), 1201 (polyvinylpyrrolidone), 1520 (Propylene glycol), 1521 (polyethylene glycol 8000).

3. Start going through your staples

So now you have a list of food additives to avoid. Where do you start? Your whole pantry? Your freezer? Your fridge? The best place to start is with your child's lunch box! Each week look at one-two items you put into the lunchbox and alternatives for them IF you need to. Repeat that process over 6 weeks and you'll have all their staples checked out. Doing it bit by bit makes it manageable!

4. Meal plan!

Meal planning can really help you eat less additives and save loads of money! Cooking from scratch using good quality ingredients will make a big difference to the health of your family because you know what's in the food you eat!

If you use takeaways as a 'treat' take a look to see if they list the ingredients online (most fast food outlets have ingredients listings on their websites). I've had a number of parents tell me they schedule takeaways on Friday night so the kids have calmed down by Monday because they know if they struggle to manage their child's teacher won't be able to manage their child's reaction and teach another 29 kids! So, if you really don't know what you're eating, and the kids react do what you can to find out what's in the food they are eating and which food additives you can identify.

Remember – start small because a little bit of effort every day makes it easier in the long run!

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