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Myth: Candy Makes Your Kids Hyper.



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# Myth: Candy Makes Your Kids Hyper

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There is **no** evidence that children who consume a lot of candy will be hyperactive – none. It won't stop you from hearing that “teachers will tell you the day after halloween kids are more hyper than usual.”



Sometimes its what the parents expect rather than what the kids eat, or drink. My son – finger painting and drinking my coffee

But when this has been studied– and it has been studied and re– studied a lot– there is absolutely no association. It doesn't matter if the kids eat items with lots of sugar, or chocolate, or sugar that is “natural.” It has been studied extensively in children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and re– studied.

So why do “they” all say this happens? It is what we call confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is when you have a certain belief and every event that

happens to confirm that belief you remember, and the evidence that opposes that belief you ignore. In fact, it may be the expectation of hyperactivity that causes the problem. One study looked at this from that perspective– what if it was **the parents expectancy** of children and sugar that caused the hyperactivity. So this was tested – and even if the kids were not given non– sugar (but the mother thought it was sugar) those “sugar expectancy” moms rated their children as “significantly more hyperactive.” And the conclusion of that study:

*“Behavioral observations revealed these mothers exercised more*

*control by maintaining physical closeness, as well as showing trends to criticize, look at, and talk to their sons more than did control mothers. For several variables, the expectancy effect was stronger for cognitively rigid mothers. “*

So if you think something will happen, when you see it happen, it clicks – now your bias is confirmed. This is the hardest bias to overcome, for scientists, doctors, teachers, and lay people. Confirmation bias is the reason why so many people believe in things in spite of clear evidence to the contrary. You can see plenty of evidence of that in the comments of some of our blogs and our videos. Confirmation bias is the reason for racial prejudice, it is the reason for people believing all sorts of nonsense. Confirmation bias is the hardest bias to break people out of.



It is important to teach your kids to make healthy selections

There are plenty of reasons to limit the consumption of sugar in kids: it isn't good for their teeth, it isn't good for their health, it isn't good for them to think sugar is a “treat” above all others.

What is good is for kids to appreciate and enjoy a balanced diet.

Still, there is room to improve our diet. It does appear that a diet of junk food in early childhood may result in problems with hyperactivity later in life – it remains to be seen the long-term impact. One thing is clear: if you eat at home with the family, eat a balanced diet, the chances of having obesity, or other problems are clearly diminished.

The theme of our upcoming book (an eating book) is that obesity, and a lot of issues, can be solved by having a balanced diet, learning to cook, eating meals at home. We have shown how parents have no idea what calories are in meals when their kids eat out – you can find that link [here](#). We have also shown how if you get pre-made food you will have higher BPA levels (click [here](#)) – another reason to cook at home. Finally, there is no doubt that fructose is a major factor in obesity, and while occasional holidays are not a big issue, having a diet with a lot of excess sugar is never healthy (click [here](#)).

If you want time with your family, meaningful time- and wish to have a more balanced life, as well as diet- learn to cook, eat at home with the family- and enjoy the holidays.

## REFERENCES:

Here is the study about mom's who think their kids are more hyper with sugar even if their kids didn't get the sugar:

Hoover DW, Milich R. Effects of sugar ingestion expectancies on mother-child interactions. J Abnorm Child Psychol 1994;22:501-

15.

Kinsbourne M. Sugar and the hyperactive child. *N Engl J Med* 1994;330:355-6. Pub Med ID 7963081

This study looks at 23 different studies and came to the conclusion that sugar does not affect the behavior or cognitive performance of children, and that it is the belief of parents (confirmation bias) that may be the cause of the issue:

Wolraich ML, Wilson DB, White JW. The effect of sugar on behavior or cognition in children. A meta-analysis. *JAMA*. 1995 Nov 22-29;274(20):1617-21. Pub Med ID 7474248

This is a summary of twelve studies that showed that sugar was not an issue, nor were food additives. No evidence that diet treatment was appropriate for behavior problems.

Krummel DA, Seligson FH, Guthrie HA. Hyperactivity: is candy causal? *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr* 1996;36:31-47. Pub Med ID 8747098

Some thought in addition to sugar, it could be sweeteners – this study showed it wasn't an issue with either the behavior of the kids or their ability to think

Wolraich ML, Lindgren SD, Stumbo PJ, Stegink LD, Appelbaum MI, Kiritsy MC. Effects of diets high in sucrose or aspartame on the behavior and cognitive performance of children. *N Engl J Med* 1994;330:301-7. Pub Med ID 8277950

This is the study about long term effects of junk food. One also has to wonder if sitting down with families at a meal, cooking, and making it a family activity would have an impact.

Wiles NJ, Northstone K, Emmett P, Lewis G 'Junk food' diet and childhood behavioural problems: results from the ALSPAC cohort Eur J Clin Nutr. 2009 Apr;63(4):491-8. Epub 2007 Dec 5. Pub Med ID 18059416

### About [Dr. Terry Simpson](#)



Dr. Terry Simpson received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Chicago where he spent several years in the Kovler Viral Oncology laboratories doing genetic engineering. He found he liked people more than petri dishes, and went to medical school. Dr. Simpson, a weight loss surgeon is an advocate of culinary medicine. The first surgeon to become certified in Culinary Medicine, he believes teaching people to improve their health through their food and in their kitchen. On the other side of the world, he has been a leading advocate of changing health care to make it more "relationship based," and his efforts awarded his team the Malcolm Baldrige award for healthcare in 2018 and 2011 for the NUKA system of care in Alaska and in 2013 Dr Simpson won the National Indian Health Board Area Impact Award. A frequent contributor to media outlets discussing health related topics and advances in medicine, he is also a proud dad, husband, author, cook, and surgeon "in that order." For media inquiries, please visit

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Posted by Dr. Terry Simpson on October 31, 2012



## Lynn

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Children may become hyper after birthday parties and holidays but that may be as a result of an altered schedule or lots of excitement. If everyone cooks and eats at home, what will be with all the fast food restaurants?

October 31, 2012 at 12:36 pm

## thedoc

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Kids get excited because they get excited- and often around other kids, and having fun. I hope the fast food restaurants slow down to where people eat occasionally there

November 1, 2012 at 11:12 am

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navigation init [...]



## Lynn

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Uh don't look now Doc but the Cookie Monster is now under scrutiny. He is on a diet and can only have cookies "sometimes". He is getting the blame for childhood obesity.

January 20, 2013 at 10:25 am

## thedoc

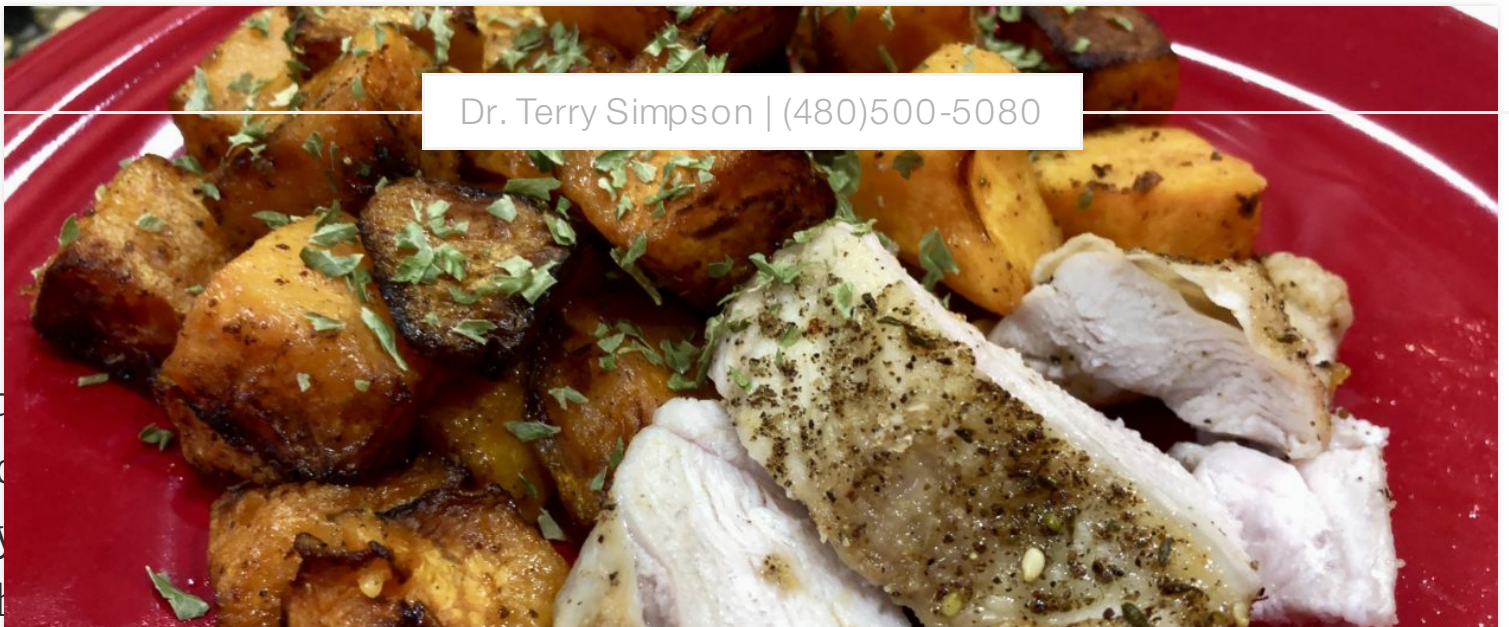
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It isn't the Cookie Monster - but the parent monster that lets his kids have the cookies (sometimes that is me)

January 21, 2013 at 11:01 am

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# Airfryer Butternut Squash and Chicken

Using the airfryer to do meals in one setting is ok- although I prefer my chicken cooked Sous Vide Style- here is a video showing the whole thing. Give it a try!

Posted by Dr. Terry Simpson on April 14, 2018



## The Mighty Meatball: Bringing Back the Flavor

We went to four countries to find the Norwegian meatball of my youth. In that journey we learned the history of the meatball, and finally – the recipe to make those great meatballs.

Posted by Dr. Terry Simpson on December 1, 2017





## DASH Diet: First Line Therapy For Hypertension

The DASH diet was developed by science, not by notions. It follows current guidelines, and provides a healthy way to live. Here is the diet and sample menu plans.

Posted by Dr. Terry Simpson on November 16, 2017

