

Calm

FROM PAGE 1

Once ingested, we can start feeling its effect within 15 minutes, and this can last for several hours. In fact, it takes about six hours for just half of the caffeine to be eliminated from our system. Imagine its effect on a young child's small body!

Caffeine causes changes in our body such as an increase in our heart rate and breathing rate. These are the same feelings we get during a stressful event when the fight or flight response kicks in.

Consuming caffeine when already hyped up from stress only adds fuel to the fire, making it so much harder for the body to calm down and get back to a balanced state.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that children stay away from caffeine because it interferes with their ability to get a good night's sleep.

Check out these ways to keep your children away from caffeine:

- Avoid serving your children caffeinated beverages — soda, coffee, tea, energy drinks and caffeinated water.

- Watch out for foods containing chocolate, since they have caffeine that can affect your child.



TATEVOSIAN YANA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Helping your children enjoy a calm, balanced lifestyle can be aided by encouraging them to drink water and avoid caffeine.

- Carefully read labels since some products surprisingly contain caffeine.
- Get your child to love drinking water.

Say goodbye to sugar

Doctors and health professionals clearly warn us that added sugar can lead to health problems like diabetes, heart disease and obesity, but did you know that sugar can also trigger anxiety?

Similar to how caffeine affects our nervous system, sugar highs can contribute to symptoms that mimic a panic attack.

Our kids can experience blurry vision, fatigue, difficulty thinking and increased heart rate just from eating sugar. These symptoms can cause those who already suffer from anxiety to be even more worried and fearful, which in turn, worsens their symptoms.

The worst part about the connection between sugar and anxiety is that it can sneak up on us.

While primary sugar may be perfectly healthy when found in fruits, vegetables, and milk, secondary sugar is hidden in foods you may serve to your children without even realizing it. Salad dressing, yogurt, smoothies and even “health” bars can be loaded with hidden added sugars.

Here are some tips to help keep all of that sugar off your children's plate:

- Avoid keeping sugary snacks around the house, such as in cookie jars, candy dishes and gumball machines.

- Do not use treats to reward or punish your kids. (This includes during potty training!)

- Instead of giving your kids candy for a special occasion, order or make your

own delicious fruit creations like bouquets, skewers or fun shapes and characters.

- Prepare in advance when you know sugar-intense holidays are coming up like Halloween and Valentine's Day. Provide attractive healthy options so your kids don't miss the sugary snacks, such as delicious fruit and sugar-free desserts.

- Model good eating habits. Understand that a sugar-free lifestyle for the kids means a sugar-free lifestyle for the parents, too.

Making these changes may seem daunting at first, but there are so many resources and creative ideas available to make your transition go smoothly.

In many cases, your children will probably not even realize the difference. By forming these important healthy habits early in their lives, your children will benefit in the long run by living a healthy calm lifestyle.

Sandi Schwartz is an author, journalist and mother of two. She has written extensively about parenting, wellness and environmental issues. Her new book, "Finding Ecohappiness: Fun Nature Activities to Help Your Kids Feel Happier and Calmer," comes out in the spring. Learn more at ecohappinessproject.com.

Access

FROM PAGE 1

create a need for services.

Examples of adverse impacts include:

- A discrepancy between performance and ability,
- Limited progress, or deficiency in cognitive areas,
- Evidence of emotional or behavioral disturbances, and
- Problems with fine or gross motor skills.

For example, if a child is developmentally and chronologically 10 years old but continues to read at a first grade level, the adverse effect would be a limited progres-

sion in reading.

With regards to ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), IDEA allows school districts to add classifications at their discretion.

This means that if a disorder is severe, the IEP team can determine that a child needs special education services. Many districts use the “Other Health Impaired” category for these types of situations.

Impact on services

In addition to the possible disparity mentioned earlier, the primary difference between a medical diagnosis and an educational eligibility determination is the impact the condition has on student learning.

The educational team (along with the parents) must conclude that autism symptoms or other disorders interfere with learning and that the student needs special services in order to make academic progress.

Because of this additional requirement, it is possible (and not infrequent) that a student has a medical diagnosis of autism (or other disorders) but is ineligible for special education.

Students who are found ineligible for special education may qualify for other services, such as accommodations, under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Options to consider

The fundamental distinction between a medical diagnosis and

an educational determination is the impact the condition has on student learning.

Parents have a variety of options regarding treatment and have to decide whether to pursue treatment through the medical system, the education system, or both.

If your concerns about your child are mostly behavioral and are mainly occurring in the home, then you might want to pursue psychological treatment first.

If your child is having academic or behavioral difficulties at school, then you should pursue an evaluation through the school district to see what resources are available to your child.

However, educational and medical services can be pursued si-

multaneously, which is often the best strategy for children on the autism spectrum.

The most important factor in both processes is the goal of maximizing each child's potential.

Adam Wasserman is a Los Angeles attorney who grew up with ADHD and Dyslexia. His insights to families come from his life experience as a child with a disability. The Social Justice aspect of his practice helps families that do not have access to legal assistance. His practice is statewide. He exclusively practices special education law for children from the age of 3 to adults the age of 22.