

Investigating nutrition in young children with autism

May 11 2015



Quinn, an autistic boy, and the line of toys he made before falling asleep. Repeatedly stacking or lining up objects is a behavior commonly associated with autism. Credit: Wikipedia.

In New Zealand one child in every 100 is diagnosed with a condition on the autism spectrum. It can be a stressful time for families coping with the reality of this diagnosis.

For parents and caregivers of children with [autism spectrum disorder](#) (ASD) making sure children have the right nutrition is a daily challenge. Now researchers at Massey University's School of Food and Nutrition are investigating if omega-3 and vitamin D can help improve the quality of life for these families.

Principal investigator Dr Pamela von Hurst says this is new, world-leading research that Auckland-based families can participate in.

"The Vitamin D and omega-3 in Autism (VIDOMA) study will investigate the effect of supplementing vitamin D and omega-3 in 200 children aged three to seven years who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. This is a very new area of research, and we are hoping that families will be willing to sign up and participate.

"Both vitamin D and omega-3 are known to play a number of roles in brain development, learning, memory and behaviour. We want to find out if supplementing these important nutrients can help reduce the severity of the condition, improve the developmental and cognitive profile of these children, and improve the quality of life for their families," says Dr von Hurst.

Internationally, the prevalence of autism appears to be increasing, but the cause is unknown.

"Each child taking part will receive a full psychological assessment as well as a nutritional assessment, which will be beneficial for all the families taking part," says Dr von Hurst. "The research team has a raft of expertise in both autism and nutrition, and we are hopeful that this study will make a difference for all families who have children with autism."

The research team includes two psychologists, a paediatrician from the Waitemata District Health Board, and staff from the School of Food and

Nutrition. The study manager and first point of contact is Mr Owen Mugridge.

The study will take place over a 12-month period, with [children](#) randomly allocated to [vitamin D](#), [omega-3](#), a combination of both, or a placebo which they will continuously take over that period. Children will attend five appointments across the 12 month period at either Massey University's Auckland campus, North Shore or Waitakere Hospitals. Three blood tests will be taken across the year and analysed. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential, and participants will receive all the results pertinent to their child.

More information: To register your interest, get more information or contact one of the VIDOMA team, go to the website:

www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learn/vidoma-study_home.cfm

Provided by Massey University

Citation: Investigating nutrition in young children with autism (2015, May 11) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-nutrition-young-children-autism.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--