

5 COMMON FOODS

**That Could Be Influencing
Your Child's Mood, Focus
and Behavior**



Dr. Teri Rouse

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Teri Rouse, an esteemed expert with over 30 years of experience in early and behavior intervention, autism, and educational coaching, this book is a treasure trove of practical advice and proven strategies. Dr. Rouse is an international speaker and multiple best-selling author. She is also the creative force behind the Snuggle Bunny Story Time and Book Club.



Her work is dedicated to empowering families and educators to support the development and well-being of children, particularly in challenging or specialized contexts. With her extensive background and heartfelt commitment, Dr. Rouse provides insights that are theoretically sound, immensely practical, and easy to implement.

5 Common Foods

That Can Influence How You Feel and
How You Behave

Food has a significant impact on mood, focus, and overall behavior—especially in children. However, these effects are often overlooked by schools, counselors, and even the medical field until parents start making connections between diet and behavioral changes.

Understanding which foods may be affecting your child's behavior can be life-changing. Below, we explore five common culprits, backed by research, along with healthier alternatives that support emotional regulation and cognitive function.

5 Common Foods

That Can Influence How You Feel and How You Behave



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DAIRY

Children who have allergies or intolerance to dairy might...

Behavioral Symptoms:

IRRITABILITY

- CRANKY
- MOOD SWINGS
- DIFFICULTY FOCUSING

AGGRESSIVE

- PHYSICALLY
- VERBALLY

Common sources: Milk, cheese, eggs, milk powder, butter, margarine, yogurt, cream, ice cream

Common symptoms:

- Swelling of the tongue, mouth or face
- Difficulty breathing
- Low blood pressure
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Hives
- Itchy rash
- Anaphylaxis
- Ear infections

 **Learn more:** [Harvard Health - Dairy and Digestion](#)

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ARTIFICIAL COLORING

Has been linked to:

**HYPERACTIVITY
& ADHD
SYMPTOMS**

**INCREASED IMPULSIVITY
AND DIFFICULTY
CONCENTRATING**

**MOOD
SWINGS &
ANXIETY**

**FLUCTUATIONS IN MOOD
AND INCREASED
ANXIETY LEVELS**

**GASTRO-
INTESTINAL
ISSUES &
HEADACHES**

**SOME INDIVIDUALS
EXPERIENCE STOMACH
DISCOMFORT AND
MIGRAINES**

Foods to Watch Out For: Candy, soda, fruit-flavored drinks, flavored yogurts, cereals, and even bread.

[!\[\]\(35dc653d59570f8f891c312eeece91a2_img.jpg\) **Learn more:** \[NIH Study on Food Dyes & ADHD\]\(#\)](#)

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SUGAR

Specifically refined sugar

**HYPER-
ACTIVITY**

- **PROBLEMS STAYING FOCUSED**
- **PROBLEMS SLEEPING**

DEPRESSION

- **RAPID CHANGE IN BLOOD SUGAR**
- **MOOD CHANGES**

**LONG-TERM
HEALTH
ISSUES**

- **OBESITY**
- **DIABETES**

Sugar is in just about everything the average child eats (syrup, cereals, bread fruit drinks). Natural sugars found in fruits and honey, syrup while they are natural you should monitored especially.

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PRESERVATIVES

NITRATES

- MAY BE FOUND IN LEAFY VEGETABLES, CURED MEATS, AND DRINKING WATER
- INCREASED RISK OF CANCER

SODIUM BENZOATE

COMMON IN JUICE PRODUCTS, MAY INTENSIFY HYPERACTIVITY AND MOOD SWINGS

MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE (MSG)

USED AS A FLAVOR ENHANCER IN FAST FOOD, LINKED TO BEHAVIORAL CHANGES, HEADACHES, AND HYPERACTIVITY

It has been suggested that several preservatives may cause behavioral issues in children.

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FOOD ALLERGENS

INTOLERANCE

NON-LIFE-THREATENING BUT CAN CAUSE DIGESTIVE DISTRESS, FATIGUE, AND MOOD SWINGS

SENSITIVITY

**• FOOD SENSITIVITIES ARE NOT LIFE-THREATENING
• MOST PEOPLE DON'T INITIALLY REALIZE THEY HAVE A SENSITIVITY
• MANY PEOPLE ATTRIBUTE THEIR SYMPTOMS TO POOR DIET, ILLNESS, OR AGE. MOST OF THE SYMPTOMS ARE MILD BUT PUT TOGETHER; THEY CAN INTERFERE WITH YOUR DAILY ROUTINE AND MAKE YOU FEEL RUN-DOWN**

ALLERGY

**• CAN BE LIFE-THREATENING!
• TRIGGERS AN IMMUNE SYSTEM RESPONSE THAT CAN BE SEVERE, INCLUDING ANAPHYLAXIS.**

Common Physical Symptoms:

- Diarrhea
- Bloating
- Rashes
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Abdominal pain
- Runny nose
- Reflux
- Flushing of the skin

Common Behavioral Symptoms:

- Increased irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Hyperactivity
- Difficulty sleeping

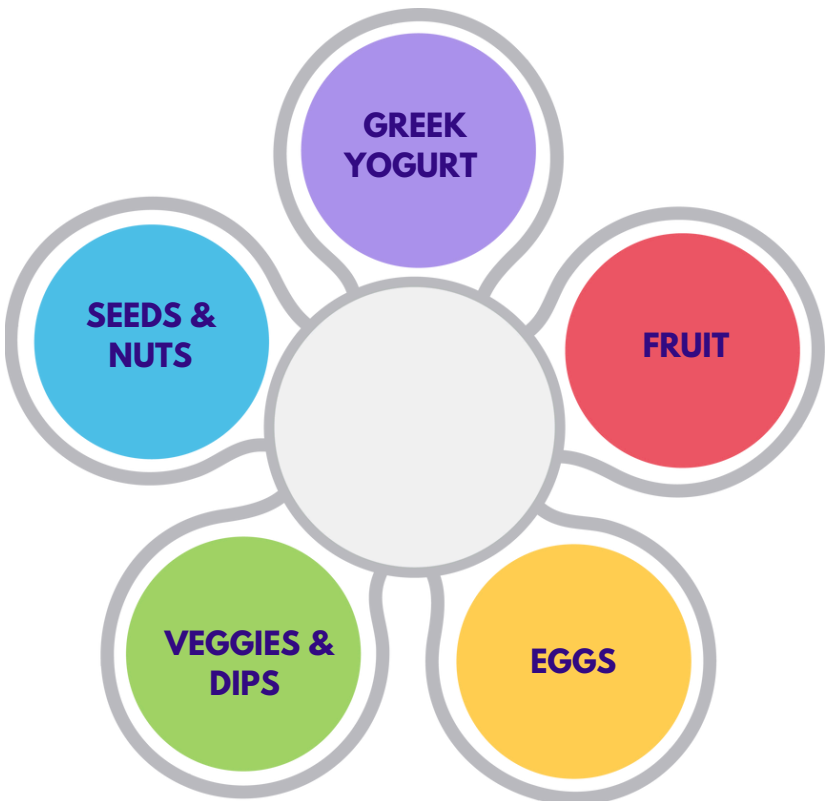
[!\[\]\(4b7a79268f6ba26c1471d4232fffa85a_img.jpg\) Learn more: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology](#)

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SOME AFTER SCHOOL SNACKS THAT BOOST BRAIN POWER

Please keep in mind that some of the foods listed are also on the “allergy” list. Please consult with your doctor if you have questions or concerns with regard to foods to feed your child.



5 Common Foods

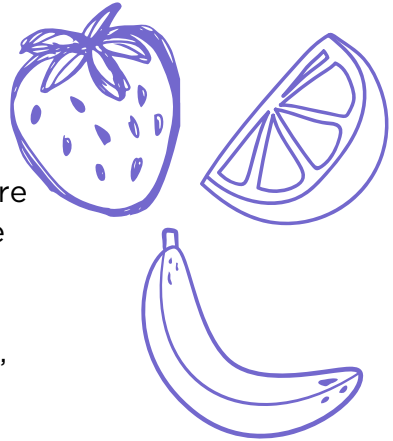
That Can Influence How You Feel and
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GREEK YOGURT

Full-fat Greek yogurt provides a healthy amount of fat along with protein to boost energy and carry your child until dinner time. Incorporate some fruits, dark chocolate chips or some nuts/seeds to give it a little crunch.

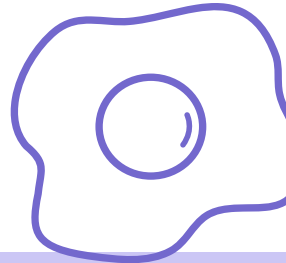
FRUITS

Fruits like blueberries and strawberries pack plenty of antioxidants into a serving and are easy for little hands to eat by the handful. Consider these other options: Easy peel clementine oranges, apples, seedless grapes, dried fruit snacks like raisins, unsweetened applesauce.



EGGS

Hard boiled eggs provide a full serving of protein. You can make them on the weekend and have them on hand all week. They will keep for 5-7 days.

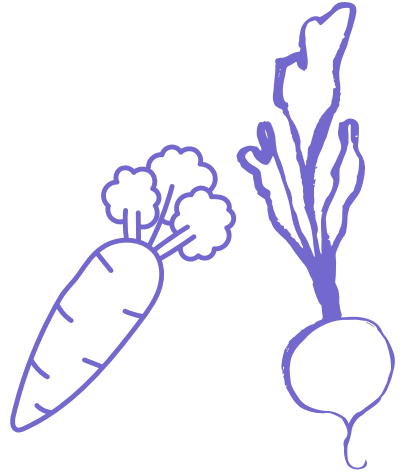


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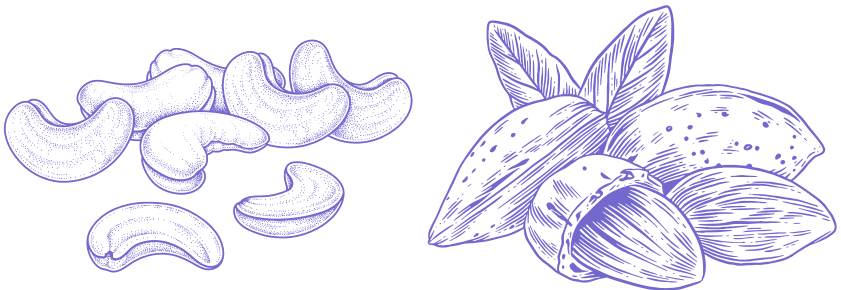
VEGGIES & DIPS

Kids enjoy munching on carrots, celery sticks, grape tomatoes, or red pepper strips. Add dip to give both flavor appeal and nutrition. Greek yogurt can be used rather than sour cream as a base for your dip. Hummus is also a good option.



NUTS & SEEDS

Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and almonds are high in protein and healthy oils and just a small handful makes a full serving. Serve them alone or with other snacks to add some crunch. Some studies have shown that nuts and seeds to have a mood-boosting effect.



[!\[\]\(ec9132f1d27c8919987d92907322654d_img.jpg\) Learn more:](#) [Cleveland Clinic - Best Brain Foods for Kids](https://www.clevelandclinic.org/health/food-and-nutrition/12345)

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SOME FOODS AND BEVERAGES THAT MAY HAVE CALMING EFFECTS:

SALMON

Contains nutrients that promote brain health, including vitamin D and the omega-3 fatty acid eicosapentaenoic acid.

CHAMOMILE

Is an herb that may help reduce anxiety.

TURMERIC

is a spice that contains curcumin, a compound studied for its role in promoting brain health.

CURCUMIN

Also has powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.

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SOME FOODS AND BEVERAGES THAT MAY HAVE CALMING EFFECTS:

DARK CHOCOLATE

Contains flavonols, which are antioxidants that may benefit brain function.

YOGURT

Is a great food to include in your diet. The probiotics, or healthy bacteria, found in some types of yogurt can improve several aspects of your well-being.



TURKEY, BANANAS AND OATS

These are good sources of the amino acid tryptophan, which is converted to serotonin.

EGGS, MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

All provide high-quality protein including essential amino acids that produce the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin.

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SOME FOODS AND BEVERAGES THAT MAY HAVE CALMING EFFECTS:

CHIA SEEDS

Chia seeds are another good source of brain-boosting omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to help with anxiety.

CITRUS FRUITS AND BELL PEPPERS

These fruits are rich in vitamin C, which has antioxidant properties.

ALMONDS

Almonds provide a significant amount of vitamin E.

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries are high in vitamin C and other antioxidants, such as flavonoids.



[!\[\]\(51514032c8ca341817228f39f1307b05_img.jpg\) Learn more: Healthline – Top Anxiety-Reducing Foods](#)

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CONCLUSION

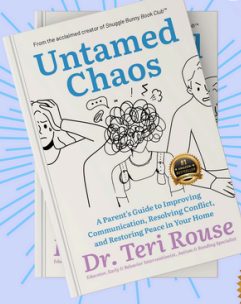
What we put into our bodies directly affects how we feel, think, and behave. Whether you're a parent trying to help your child with focus and emotional regulation, or an adult looking to optimize your well-being, understanding the connection between diet and behavior is crucial.

- **Start Small:** Begin by identifying patterns in food intake and behavioral shifts.
- **Eliminate & Replace:** Slowly remove potential problem foods and replace them with healthier options.
- **Monitor & Adapt:** Every child (and adult) is different—what works for one may not work for another.

If you suspect that diet is influencing your child's behavior, consider keeping a food diary to track meals and behavioral responses. Consulting a healthcare provider, nutritionist, or specialist can also provide guidance on making sustainable changes. By making informed choices, you empower your family with better focus, mood stability, and overall health.

[!\[\]\(96cc62f861fdd6e50510c0224a756dff_img.jpg\) Learn more: \[American Academy of Pediatrics - Nutrition & Behavioral Health\]\(#\)](#)

#1 International
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NEED MY HELP IN IMPLEMENTING THESE NEW STRATEGIES?

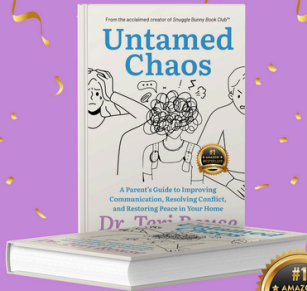
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