



# Autism and dietary approaches

Co-occurring conditions such as anxiety or gastrointestinal issues, which are common among Autistic individuals, can make diet and nutrition more complex to manage, affecting food preferences, appetite, digestion and overall health outcomes.

**Our purpose  
a different brilliant®**

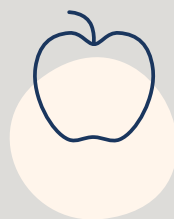
Understanding, engaging  
and celebrating the strengths,  
interests and aspirations of people  
on the autism spectrum.

## Diets and supplements

Many Autistic individuals and their families consider exploring diet-based approaches that claim to support well-being by managing or altering diet and nutrition. These approaches include the gluten and casein-free diet, the ketogenic diet, the yeast-free diet, the restriction of food allergens, and the use of probiotics and dietary supplements such as vitamins A, C, B6, folic acid, B12, minerals (e.g. magnesium) and omega-3 fatty acids.

## Current research on dietary approaches

Research over the past two decades has explored the relationship between diet, nutrition, and autism, with a focus on areas such as food additives, refined sugar, food allergies and fatty acid metabolism. While there is growing interest in this field, it is important to note that, to date, there is no conclusive evidence supporting the effectiveness of specific dietary approaches in significantly altering Autistic traits or experiences.



## Considerations for health and well-being

While some individuals may find certain dietary approaches beneficial, it is crucial to consider both potential benefits and risks. For instance, eliminating major food groups, such as dairy or grains, can lead to nutrient deficiencies, which may impact overall health. Additionally, some dietary changes, like the gluten and casein-free diet, may pose risks such as decreased bone density. It is always important to approach these decisions thoughtfully and in consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.



## Supporting your personal choice

Autistic individuals, as well as parents and caregivers of Autistic children, are the foremost experts on their own or their child's bodies and experiences. The choice to explore dietary approaches is a personal one, and it should be respected as part of an individual's or family's right to self-determination. For parents and caregivers, it is important to consider their child's unique needs and preferences when making decisions about diet. Whether the decision is made by the individual themselves or by their caregivers, pursuing these options with professional guidance is recommended to ensure that nutritional needs are met and overall well-being is prioritised.

## References

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Nogay, N. H., & Nahikian-Nelms, M. (2023). **Effects of nutritional interventions in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder: an overview based on a literature review.** *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*.

## Based on the idea of a different **brilliant®**, Aspect's approach:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.