



A Sunfield Fact Sheet

Healthy Living and Nutrition

Background

There is a growing body of literature and evidence to suggest that some of the symptoms associated with autism could arise in response to a range of external and internal factors. This fact sheet provides an overview of the research. You can access more detailed information via the links at the bottom of this page.

Dr Martha Herbert, MD, PHD, a paediatric neurologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, and Assistant Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical, published a book on autism, entitled 'The Autism Revolution - Whole Body Strategies For Making Life All It Can Be', which draws on findings from a vast body of research.

In her book, Dr Herbert makes a strong case for viewing autism as a condition that affects, and is affected by, the whole body; a set of symptoms that emerge from a complex web of interacting systems that are both internal (physical, emotional and cognitive) and external (environmental).

Healthy living at Sunfield

According to Dr Herbert's research, most of the things over which we can exert some real influence fall under the headings of food, toxins, bugs, and stress. Although, the research is ongoing, at Sunfield, we are already adopting a precautionary approach to supporting the health of our children.

Sunfield's heritage lies in producing and eating biodynamic and organic food, so many of Dr Herbert's suggestions are already coherent with our cultural heritage. We have further strengthened this with a strategy, which aims to minimise the children's everyday exposure to a range of environmental toxins, such as the chemicals contained in food, cleaning products, and agricultural and horticultural practises.

We cost-effectively source non-toxic industrial-strength cleaning products and laundry detergents, and have a number of healthy food initiatives in place. Where necessary, we work with children, families and medical practitioners to tailor a child's diet to their needs and will implement strategies to support children with some nutrition-associated symptoms of autism, such as weight control and gastrointestinal imbalances.

With the support of Jo Gamble, an experienced Nutritional Therapist and Functional Medicine Practitioner, Sunfield's teams in Catering, Care and Education have established a strategy to source, menu plan and prepare food at Sunfield, to provide children with a balanced diet, including wholesome snacks, that enables them to consistently focus on their education and activities throughout the day.

"I'm excited to be working with Sunfield to implement positive change," says Jo. "Following the research of biomedical intervention for many years, I am convinced that adaptations can have a positive influence on the long term health and well-being, both physically and mentally, of young people on the autistic spectrum. By embracing change, and sharing this knowledge with families and other external professionals, we can work together, as a team, with a shared interest in well-being."

Sunfield is a member of the Food for Life scheme, operated by the Soil Association. We have our own smallholding, vegetable garden, canteen and cafe on site, which provide lots of opportunities for children to get involved in the growing, production, preparation and serving of food. We also maximise children's exposure to the wonderful rural environment here at Sunfield, which benefits them emotionally and physically.

We maintain an active interest in the ongoing research into the effects of nutrition and the environment on conditions such as autism, and ensure that staff and families are aware of key findings in these areas.

Further reading

Dr Martha Herbert – <http://www.marthahebert.org/>.

The Autism Revolution – <http://www.autismrevolution.org/>.

Autism Speaks (USA) – <http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/research-initiatives/environmental-factors-autism-initiative>.

Food for the Brain: Autism – <http://www.foodforthebrain.org/nutrition-solutions/autism.aspx>.

National Autistic Society – <http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies-and-approaches/biomedical-interventions.aspx>.

Dr Amy Yasko - <http://www.dramyyasko.com/our-unique-approach/following-the-program/>

Gut and Psychology Syndrome - <http://www.gaps.me>

Autism Diets: The First Step to Biomedical Intervention and Autism Recovery - <http://www.generationrescue.org/assets/Published-Science/Autism-Diets-The-First-Step-to-Biomedical-Intervention-and-Autism-Recovery.pdf>

An Introduction to Possible Biomedical Causes and Treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorders - See more at: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=473#sthash.flrmU2Xg.dpuf> - <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=473>