

The Specific Carbohydrate Diet

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Nutritional therapy in pediatric Crohn's disease is well established as an effective treatment to induce remission of active inflammation. The most rigorously studied dietary therapy is Enteral Nutrition Therapy (ENT), which has been established as an effective therapy in 80% of children.

The specific carbohydrate diet (SCD) is a nutritionally complete grain-free diet, low in sugar and lactose. It was developed by Dr. Sidney Haas, a pediatrician, in the 1920's as treatment for celiac disease. In 1987, Elaine Gottschall published "Breaking the Vicious Cycle", after her daughter's inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) improved with use of the SCD. Currently, there are many testimonials by individuals who use this diet to manage their IBD, and recently, the scientific community started to study the diet as treatment for IBD. The research is still in the early stages, but results show potential benefit to patients. Below is a general outline of what foods are included and excluded on the SCD.

Allowed Foods on the SCD

- Meats without additives, poultry, fish shellfish and eggs
- Certain legumes, including dried navy beans, lentils, peas, split peas, unroasted cashews and peanuts in a shell, all-natural peanut butter and lima beans
- Dairy limited to cheeses such as cheddar, Colby, Swiss, dry curd cottage cheese; and homemade yogurt fermented for at least 24 hours
- Most fresh, frozen, raw or cooked vegetables and string beans
- Fresh, raw or cooked, frozen or dried fruits with no added sugar
- Most nuts and nut flours
- Most oils, teas, coffee, mustard, cider or white vinegar and juices with no additives or sugars
- Honey as a sweetener

Prohibited Foods on the SCD

- Sugar, molasses, maple syrup, sucrose, processed fructose including high-fructose corn syrup or any processed sugar
- All grain including corn, wheat, wheat germ, barley, oats, rice and others. This includes bread, pasta and baked goods made with grain-based flour
- Canned vegetables with added ingredients
- Some legumes
- Seaweed and seaweed byproducts.
- Starchy tubers such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, and turnips
- Canned and most processed meats
- Canola oil and commercial mayonnaise (because of the additives)
- All milk and milk products high in lactose such as mild cheddar, commercial yogurt, cream and sour cream, and ice cream.
- Candy, chocolate and products that contain FOS (fructooligosaccharides)

How does the diet work?

Inflammatory bowel disease occurs because a person's immune system, that part of the body which usually fights infections, is being triggered to attack the bowels by "bad" bacteria living in a person's intestines. Diet has been shown to change the type of bacteria in a person's intestines, from "bad" to "good." This is a hypothesis as to how the diet might help with inflammation.

Is this diet right for my child?

Currently, there are a few centers that support this diet as therapy. Consult your gastroenterologist and dietitian if interested in trialing the diet. It is important to follow objective markers of disease and nutritional status. This diet requires the support of a multidisciplinary team to achieve the best outcomes.

Resources

BOOKS:

Breaking the Vicious Cycle: Intestinal Health Through Diet by Elaine Gloria Gottschall, 1994.

COOKBOOKS:

- Eat Well Feel Well
- Recipes for the Specific Carbohydrate Diet by Raman Prasad
- Two Steps Forward One Step Back by Tucker Sweeney
- Lucy's Specific Carbohydrate Diet Cookbook by Lucy Rosset
- SCD Lifestyle Surviving to Thriving on SCDLifestyle.com
- Against all Grain by Danielle Walker

DIET WEBSITES:

- <http://breakingtheviciouscycle.info>
- <http://www.pecanbread.com>
- BTVC-SCD discussion group on Yahoo/Facebook group Digestive Wellness "Your SCD Superstore!" for ready made foods, supplies, equipment, etc.
- Supplements: <http://www.giprohealth.com/scdcomplete.aspx>

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.



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