

Food Additive Safety

In 1958, the United States Congress enacted the Food Additive Amendment. This was to oversee the chemicals that were intentionally put in the food supply of the American people and ensure they were safe to consume. At that time, there were only around 800 food additives. About a decade later that number had increased to 3,000 and about ten years ago that number had increased to an estimated 10,000. Over 40,000 chemicals are registered for use in the United States (1). Unfortunately, through a governmental loophole, these additives are deemed safe by the very companies putting them in our food supply.

Our food supply has been stuffed full of artificial dyes (in some cases made from petrochemicals or the bodies of ground insects), chemical additives, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Genetic modification is when genes, viruses, or bacteria from one organism are injected into fruit or vegetables in a lab, not in nature, to make the food more hardy or impervious to specific pesticides. GMOs are found in more than 70% of processed foods on our store shelves, and nearly 70% of American child's calories are from ultra-processed foods (2). More than 64 countries require foods with GMOs to be labeled or regulated. The United States does not.

It is no wonder rates of allergies, ADHD, autism, autoimmune disorders, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and some cancers have grown exponentially in children (3). Ironically, a lot of additives to the American food supply are banned in other countries. These companies will clean up their products when shipping and selling to other countries, using natural dyes and additives in order to meet the regulations. Since they are not required to for the U.S. market, they don't. Cumulatively, these chemicals may be causing the increase in chronic diseases in children (4, 5, 6).

Currently, these issues are being looked into much more deeply than the past few decades. There are four potential drivers behind the rise in childhood chronic diseases, and they are intertwined. They include chemical exposure, poor diet, lack of physical activity and chronic stress, and overmedicalization. Knowing what is in or on our foods that is harmful and actively doing our best to eliminate the exposure to these harmful additives is the first step to repairing our food supply. We should strive to choose organic or home grown/ locally grown whenever possible. We should limit all the over-processed foods that so many of us eat daily.

Women's, Infants and Children (WIC) Program is special in that the bulk of the food we provide to our participants is basic, healthy food. We also talk with our participants regarding food preparation, food safety, and making their food dollars stretch.

The Meigs County Health Dept's WIC Program can be reached at 740-992-0392 Monday-Friday from 8AM-noon and 1-4PM.

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Sources Cited:

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- 3 Wang, L., Martínez Steele, E., Du, M., Pomeranz, J. L., O'Connor, L. E., Herrick, K. A., Luo, H., Zhang, X., & Mozaffarian, D. (2021). Trends in consumption of ultraprocessed foods among US youths aged 2–19 years, 1999–2018. *JAMA*, 326(6), 519530. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2021.10238>.
- 4 Elcombe, C. S., Evans, Neil P. & Bellingham, M. (2022) Critical review and analysis of literature on low dose exposure to chemical mixtures in mammalian in vivo systems. *Critical Reviews in Toxicology* 52, 221–238.
- 5 Taiba, J., Beseler, C., Zahid, M., Bartelt-Hunt, S., Kolok, A., & Rogan, E. (2025). Exploring the joint association between agrichemical mixtures and pediatric cancer. *GeoHealth*, 9, e2024GH001236. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2024GH001236>.
- 6 Kassotis, C. D., & Phillips, A. L. (2023). Complex mixtures and multiple stressors: evaluating combined chemical exposures and cumulative toxicity. *Toxics*, 11(6), 487.