

# RESOLVING PICKY EATING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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## INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 20th Century children would eat the food that was provided by their families. With the onset of industrialization, food options marketed directly to children became prevalent and snacking the norm. When we examine the patterns of picky eaters, we need to consider how both the culture of eating (1) and the physical make up of our food has changed over the last century. When infants are first exposed to solid foods that contain additives (preservatives, pesticides, herbicides, sweeteners, ...), they will experience physiological sensations/symptoms in association with these items (2). If these sensations are unpleasant, they will try to avoid the food. If pleasant, and they have the option, they will be motivated to restrict choice to the food that 'feels' the best. In times of scarcity, children eat because they are hungry and they eat whatever is available. With abundance and choice, they are more apt to choose highly pleasurable foods more frequently (our culture of snacking....).

## FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE FOOD CHOICE

### PHYSIOLOGICAL

#### TASTE

Vegetables and fruit that have been contaminated with pesticides and herbicides can cause a bitter or burning sensation in the mouth of sensitive individuals (6)



#### TEXTURE

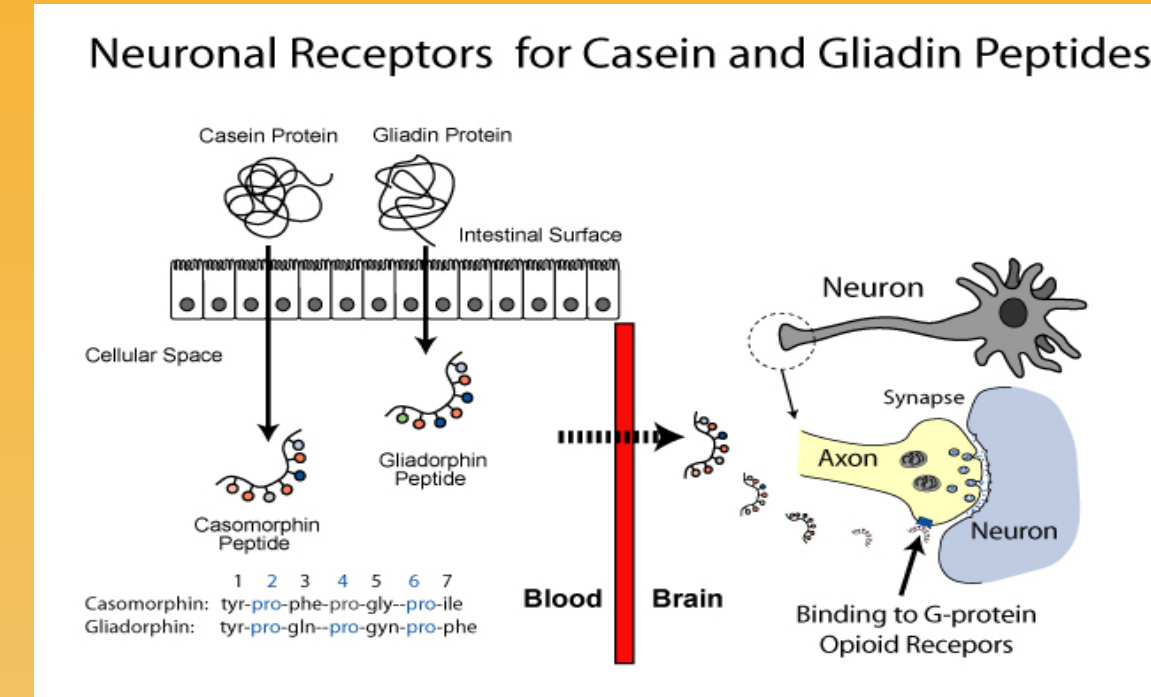
Oral sensitivity and motor delays, both common with children who have picky eating habits, can influence a child's capacity to process some food textures in their mouth (7)

#### "ADDICTIONS"

When wheat, dairy and soy are not digested properly (enter the bloodstream as peptides not amino acids), they bind with opiate receptors in the brain creating reactions of brain fog, irritability, anxiety, and craving for more of the same. (12)



Foods like white potatoes, refined flour/starches, and refined table sugar can trigger a reaction in the nucleus accumbens that causes an addictive response from the brain in the same way that heroine or cocaine do. (A2)



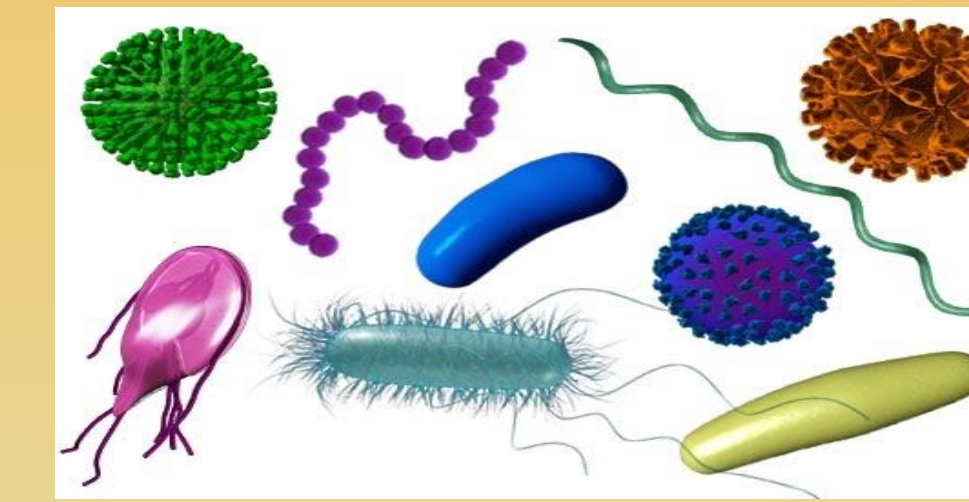
#### NUTRIENT DEFFICIENCIES

Nutrient deficiencies can alter both the taste of and appetite for food. The Standard American Diet (SAD) is typically low in foods that contain Zinc which is necessary to stimulate the sense of smell (necessary for taste) (14)



#### MICROBIOME AKA the 'BUDDIES IN OUR BELLY'

Our microbiome (yeasts, viruses, and bacteria) releases neurotransmitters and hormones that can change the behaviour of the "host". If the microbiome is dysbiotic, food seeking behaviour will self-limit to foods that are high in refined carbohydrates and sugar. (A3, A4)



## RATIONALE

It is now known that chemical food additives impact hormonal, sensory, and motor aspects of eating (the 'why' behind textural, etc. sensitivities) (2). By addressing the physiological and cultural factors that impact food choice (3), the OT can expand therapeutic options to enhance a child's capacity to eat a greater variety of whole, healthy foods.



## PICKY EATING DEFINED

According to Taylor, et al 2015, "Picky eating (also known as fussy, faddy or choosy eating) is usually classified as part of a spectrum of feeding difficulties. It is characterised by an unwillingness to eat familiar foods or to try new foods, as well as strong food preferences. The consequences may include poor dietary variety during early childhood. This, in turn, can lead to concern about the nutrient composition of the diet and thus possible adverse health/[behaviour]-related outcomes."

SNACKING, FREQUENTLY AND AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO A MEALS

LIMITED EXPOSURES TO NEW FOODS (< 30 TRIES)

80 YEARS FOLLOWING A FOOD GUIDE THAT WAS CREATED FROM EMERGENCY WAR EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE WEIGHT OF CANADIAN MALES

CUNNING AND PERVERSIVE MARKETING TACTICS

## CULTURAL

INDUSTRIAL PROCESSING OF FOOD

FOOD AS A REWARD AND SWEETS FOR EVERY OCCASION

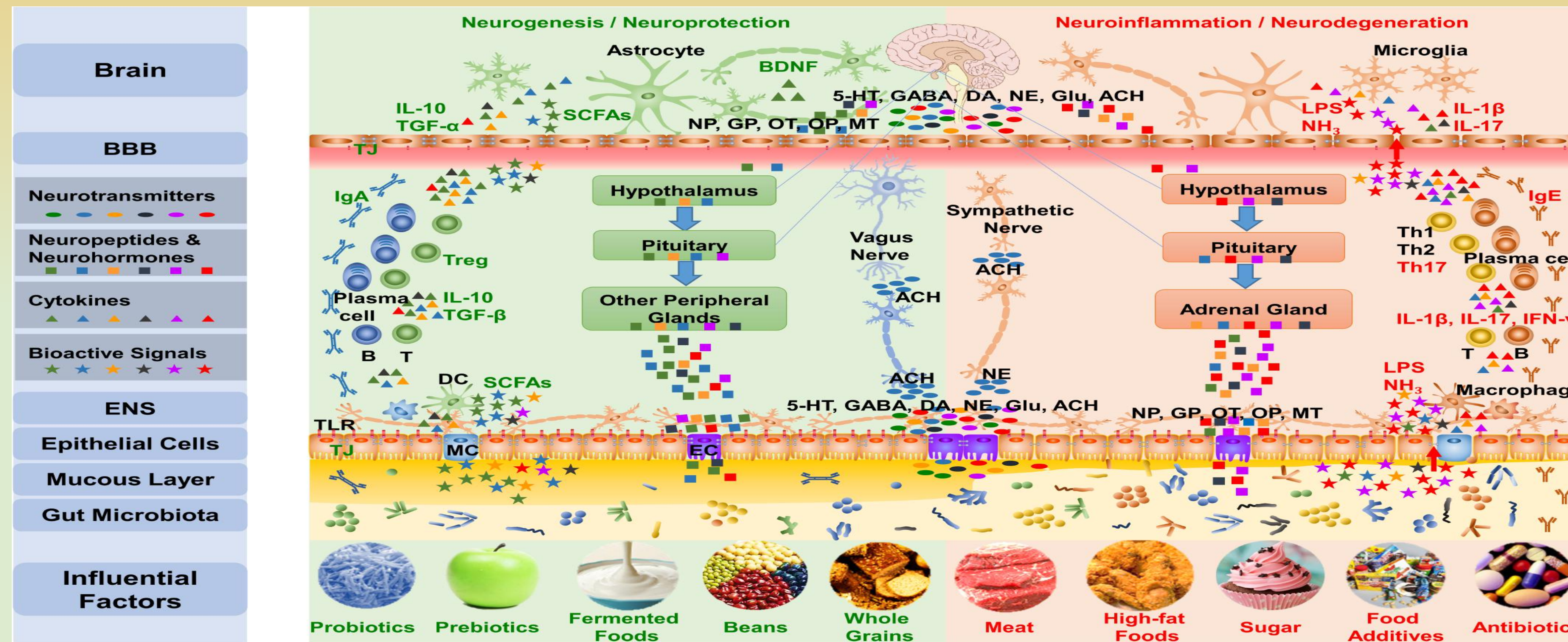
LACK OF WHOLE FOOD AVAILABLE AT SCHOOLS

GRAB and GO LIFESTYLES

PARENTS AS SHORT ORDER COOKS

ABUNDANT CHOICE

LIMITED EXPERIENCE OBTAINING OR PREPARING WHOLE FOOD



## ACTION STEPS THAT WORK

- AVOID JUNK FOOD**  
Eliminate artificial colours, flavours, and preservatives
- TAME THE TOXINS**  
Pesticide/herbicide free food may be better accepted by sensitive children
- REMOVE REACTANTS**  
Some children will not progress until additive or reactive items are removed
- ENCOURAGE WHOLE FOOD with the right TEXTURE**  
Whole foods are naturally free from additive properties and processed products. They contain necessary nutrients (like Zinc, required for taste and smell) to support the functions within the body
- LIMIT BETWEEN MEAL SNACKS**  
A hungry child is more willing to try a new food. Water, between meals, is the fluid of choice
- CARE FOR THE "BUDDIES IN OUR BELLIES"**  
Whole and naturally cultured foods help balance our microbiome. Many children are motivated to try a new food if it will benefit the 'buddies in their belly'
- PARTICIPATION IS KEY**  
Encourage kids to be involved. Play with food, help in the kitchen, grow a garden,..... Even the fussiest eater will try a fresh berry they have picked themselves
- CELEBRATE HEALTHY MEALS THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN ENJOY (the end of the short order cook)**  
The 2019 Canada Food Guide is an excellent resource (13, 14, 15)



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