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Food Allergy—The Great Masquerader

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Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abyss nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.

HUXLEY³⁰

If you practice in an office, clinic, or hospital out-patient department, you'll see youngsters who look pale and show dark shadows under their eyes. In addition, many of these youngsters will sniff, snort, and clear their throats. And some of them will also complain of headache, stomach ache, and aching in their legs and other muscles.

You'll also see children whose parents bring them in for a check-up because a teacher may have complained, "Johnny is so tired and sluggish, I wonder if he's getting enough rest." And you'll see still other children whose mothers say, "Mike is so hyperactive and irritable; there are days when I simply can't stand him." Such children may also experience trouble in learning and in getting along with siblings, schoolmates and teachers. As a result, they may be labeled "dyslexic" or said to be suffering from "school phobia" or "minimal brain dysfunction."

Children with symptoms such as these have been described repeatedly in the medical literature for over 50 years.^{4-6, 8, 10, 12-14, 24, 29, 38, 39, 44, 47, 48} Yet physicians differ considerably in their views as to the cause of their symptoms.³⁷ For example, in a period of less than 2 years, three separate articles appeared in *Pediatrics*^{36, 46, 53} describing children with abdominal pain, headache, limb pain, fatigue, irritability, pallor, cough, and other systemic symptoms.

The author of each of these reports said, in effect, "We feel complaints of this sort are caused by some sort of functional or emotional disorder in the child. Some of these complaints are based in the constitution of the child; others are deeply rooted in the child's domestic environment; still others are said to be based on 'growing-up anxiety' experienced by the child who is reared by overprotective, oversolicitous, and overdependent parents, especially mothers."

However, the conclusions of the authors of these reports were challenged by a number of correspondents^{3, 7, 8, 15, 33, 45} who said, in effect,

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