



# Healing Our Kids

## Reversing a Rising Tide of Chronic Conditions

by Ronica A. O'Hara

The statistics are startling—as many as a quarter to one half of American children now have a diagnosed chronic condition, according to studies that include one in *Academic Pediatrics* that includes obesity. Over the last few decades, the number of children with asthma has tripled to affect one in eight; those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have doubled to one in 10; and autism diagnoses have increased at least 10-fold, to affect one in 50 (one in 31 boys).

“It’s literally an epidemic of chronic childhood disease,” says Beth Lambert, of Charlotte, North Carolina, author of *A Compromised Generation: The Epidemic of Chronic Illness in America’s Children* and executive director of the nonprofit *EpidemicAnswers.org*. “Our children, with their little bodies and immature immune systems, can’t tolerate the toxic environments we’re all exposed to. They’re the canaries in the coal mine that show us that the way we are living today is not sustainable.”

### Call to Action

As scientists pinpoint the causes of conditions, parents, researchers and healthcare practitioners are discovering, Lambert says, that many of the youngsters’ chronic illnesses share a “perfect storm” of factors, including pharmaceutical overuse, toxic or nutritionally poor diets, exposure to toxins and other environmental stressors.

“Many factors contribute to these chronic disorders; one size or one treatment doesn’t fit all,” says Dr. Kenneth Bock, of Red Hook, New York, an integrative medicine practitioner who has helped more than 3,000 chronically ill children and authored *Healing the New Childhood Epidemics: Autism, ADHD, Asthma, and Allergies*. “But if children with one or more of the disorders are treated with a fully integrative medicine approach, the vast majority show some improvement, many significantly, and increasing numbers may recover to a point where they even lose their diagnosis.” Effective integrative applications often change the child’s diet to nutrient-dense, additive-free foods and supplements for gut and brain health; employ allergy testing and elimination, detoxification and behavioral and physical therapies; vet household contam-

inants; target medications like antifungals and anti-inflammatories; and use homeopathy and acupuncture.

## Case Study

Maria O'Neil's firstborn son, Connor, had a perfect Apgar score (newborn health status) at birth and appeared healthy to everyone until after immunization at 15 months, when he became withdrawn and vacant, with head-banging and hand-flapping. A pediatrician diagnosed moderately severe autism and advised, "Accept your new normal. Your son was born this way."

O'Neil exclaimed, "I will not let this disease take my child!"

After she replaced processed foods, sugar, dairy and gluten with organics in his diet, he became calmer and "more here". Tests by another pediatrician, Dr. Bob Sears, showed Connor had gut damage, mitochondrial issues, a high viral load, a low white cell count and a deficiency in basic vitamins and minerals. "Now I had a game plan," says O'Neil, of Joshua Tree, California.

Connor was given fish oil, B<sub>12</sub> shots, juices, targeted herbs, Epsom salt baths, hyperbaric oxygen, a mitochondrial cocktail of nutraceuticals, medication with the antifungal fluconazole (Diflucan), the antiviral valacyclovir (Valtrex) and the immunity-enhancing naltrexone (Revia), plus acupuncture, homeopathy and chiropractic. Over time, Connor's eyes brightened, his language "burst forth" and he became social and loving.

By age 5, educators took him off his individualized learning program because he had no relevant symptoms. Today, at 9, he's a popular

fourth-grade kid that loves swimming, soccer and art, and wants to become a scientist or engineer. "The future is limitless for Connor," O'Neil reports. "He can do anything he sets his mind to."

## Brighter Future

"Once you have addressed the root causes, you can optimize healing by using the additional integrative modalities to help prevent chronic illnesses now and in years to come," explains family physician Madiha Saeed, of Naperville, Illinois, author of *The Holistic Rx: Your Guide to Healing Chronic Inflammation and Disease*.

The multipronged integrative approach is supported by studies that link poor gastrointestinal health to childhood diseases, notes Lambert. Italian researchers found a greater prevalence of "bad" gut bacteria in autistic children. In New Zealand, it was shown that those with ADHD have gut bacteria that reduces dopamine, a neurotransmitter that controls the brain's reward center.

At *EpidemicAnswers.org*, medical professionals and parents have created a comprehensive database of resources, studies, strategies and health coaches to help realize a child's full potential. It plans to follow 14 children with chronic conditions through 18 months of healing and recovery therapeutic services to be documented in a film titled *Canary Kids*.

"We want to show parents that there's hope—because then they can take the next step and move forward," says Lambert.

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## More Help for Healing

**EWG.org** – the go-to website of the Environmental Working Group for information about toxicity in food, products and the environment

**Why It Matters** – video accounts from doctors; parents and recovered children; *DocumentingHope.com*