

Topic

Using diet and nutrition to manage aggression in children and youth

Key question

What is the evidence on how nutritional interventions might reduce aggressive behaviour in children and youth?

Project aims

Aggression is common in children and youth and can be developmentally appropriate. However, severe and persistent aggression often leads to negative outcomes such as academic issues, depression, or even incarceration. Treatment with medication can help. But the options are limited by issues with access, safety, and efficacy, as well as patient and family preferences.

This study explores whether nutrients such as amino acids (the building blocks of protein), vitamins, and minerals can help reduce aggression and violence in children and youth. A variety of nutrients are needed for normal development, and nutrients play an important role in the generation of neurotransmitters and hormones. This suggests promising effects. The study therefore summarizes the evidence on the effectiveness of nutritional interventions (for example, changing the diet or taking supplements) in this population.

Activities

- Reviewing existing data on the effectiveness of any nutritional intervention in managing aggression and violence in children and youth.
- Considering data from multiple sources (for example, self-report questionnaires, school and prison records, statistics on youth offending, and scales completed by parents, caregivers, or those who regularly observe the child or youth).
- Collecting and summarizing qualitative data related to nutritional interventions.

Helpful terms

- **Nutritional intervention:**
Changes to diet or nutrition to improve health.
- **Neurotransmitters:**
Chemical messengers that carry information between the body's nerve cells.

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