

How a Physician Cured Her Son's Autism...

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) July 31 2011

Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride has a full-time medical practice in the United Kingdom where she treats children and adults with autism, learning disabilities, neurological disorders, psychiatric disorders, immune disorders, and digestive problems.

Here, she shares her insights about Gut and Psychology Syndrome (GAPS), which can make a child particularly prone to vaccine damage, and the GAPS Nutritional program; a natural treatment for autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, depression and schizophrenia.

Sources:

[Natasha Campbell-McBride Interview Video Transcript](#)

<http://mercola.fileburst.com/PDF/ExpertInterviewTranscripts/InterviewNatashaCampbell-McBrideGAPS.pdf>

I'm thrilled to share this interview with you as Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride presents a truly fascinating and elegant description of the foundational conditions that contribute to autism, along with a pragmatic approach to help circumvent and stem the autism epidemic, which has been a perplexing puzzle for most of us.

Dr. Campbell is a medical doctor with a postgraduate degree in neurology. She worked as a neurologist and a neurosurgeon for several years before starting a family. When her first-born son was diagnosed autistic at the age of three, she was surprised to realize that her own profession had no answers...

Back in 1984, when she graduated from medical school, autism was an exceptionally rare disorder, with a prevalence of about 1 in 10,000.

"By the time I graduated from medical school I had never seen an autistic individual," she says. "... To be honest, the first autistic child that I encountered was my own... Five years ago we were diagnosing one child in 150, which is almost a 40-fold increase in incidence. Now in Britain and some countries, we are diagnosing one child in 66."

The rates are similar in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand as well. She quickly delved into research, looking for an answer for her son, and ended up getting a second postgraduate degree in human nutrition. As a result of her work, her son fully recovered and is no longer autistic.

Although originally from Russia, where she received her medical training, she moved to the UK about 20 years ago, and now has a clinic in Cambridge, England, where she treats children and adults with autism, learning disabilities, neurological disorders, psychiatric disorders, immune disorders, and digestive problems.

Early Treatment is Key

The treatment she developed is simply called the GAPS Nutritional Program, and as Dr. Campbell explains, the younger the child is when you start the treatment, the better the results.

"When we start the GAPS treatment at the age of 2, 3, 4, up to 5, you give your child a real chance to completely recover from autism, from ADHD, ADD, dyslexia and dyspraxia—and that larger group of children who do not fit into any diagnostic box... These are the children with whom doctors usually procrastinate. They ask the parents to bring the child in six months and again in six months to observe the child in order to just give the child a diagnosis and a very precious, very valuable time gets wasted that way while the child could have been helped," she says.

It All Starts in the Gut...

Dr. Campbell is convinced that autistic children are in fact born with perfectly normal brains and perfectly normal sensory organs.

See Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride and Me Speak in November

We are both scheduled to speak at the Weston Price Foundation Conference **Nov 11-13th**.

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"What happens in these children [is that] they do not develop normal gut flora from birth..." she says. "Gut flora is a hugely important part of our human physiology. Recently research in Scandinavia has demonstrated that 90 percent of all cells and all genetic material in a human body is our own gut flora. We are just a shell... a habitat for this mass of microbes inside us. We ignore them at our own peril.

...As a result, their digestive system—instead of being a source of nourishment for these children—becomes a major source of toxicity. These pathogenic microbes inside their digestive tract damage the integrity of the gut wall. So all sort of toxins and microbes flood into the bloodstream of the child, and get into the brain of the child. That usually happens in the second year of life in children who were breast fed because breastfeeding provides a protection against this abnormal gut flora. In children who were not breastfed, I see the symptoms of autism developing in the first year of life.

So breastfeeding is crucial to protect these children."

Brain Toxicity Leads to Symptoms of Autism

Children use all of their sensory organs to collect information from their environment, which is then passed to the brain for processing. This is a fundamental part of learning.

However, in children with Gut and Psychology Syndrome (GAPS), the toxicity flowing from their gut throughout their bodies and into their brains, clogs the brain with toxicity, preventing it from performing its normal function and process sensory information...

"Sensory information turns into this mush; into a noise in the child's brain, and from this noise the child cannot learn. They cannot decipher anything useful," she explains.

"That's why they don't learn how to communicate. They don't learn how to understand language, how to use language, how to develop all the natural instinctive behaviors and coping behaviors that normal children develop. The second year of life is crucial in the maturation of the brain of the baby. That's when communication skills develop and how instinctive behaviors develop and play skills develop in children and coping behaviors develop.

If the child's brain is clogged with toxicity, the child misses that window of opportunity of learning and starts developing autism depending on the mixture of toxins, depending on how severe the whole condition is, and how severely abnormal the gut flora is in the child."

GAPS may manifest as a conglomerate of symptoms that can fit the diagnosis of either autism, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), attention deficit disorder (ADD) without hyperactivity, dyslexia, dyspraxia, or obsessive-compulsive disorder, just to name a few possibilities...

How has Children's Gut Flora Become so Drastically Altered?

If the epidemic of autism and other learning disorders originate in the gut, what has changed in the past 25 years to alter children's gut flora into such an abnormal state?

Dr. Campbell explains:

"As far as science knows, the baby inside the mother's womb during nine months of gestation is sterile. The baby's gut is sterile. The baby acquires its gut flora at the time of birth, when the baby goes through the birth canal of the mother. So whatever lives in mom's birth canal, in mom's vagina, becomes the baby's gut flora.

So what lives in mom's vagina? It's a very richly populated area of a woman's body. The vaginal flora comes from the bowel. So if the mother has abnormal gut flora, she will have abnormal flora in her birth canal. Fathers are not exempt because fathers also have gut flora, and that gut flora populates their groin and they share their groin flora with the mother on a regular basis.

... I always collect health history from the mother, the father, and preferably even grandparents of the child. I find that we have a growing and a deepening epidemic of abnormalities in the gut flora, which began since Second World War when antibiotics were discovered. Every course of broad spectrum antibiotics wipes out the beneficial species of microbes in the gut, which leaves the pathogens in there uncontrolled."

The Massive Importance of Fermented Foods and Probiotics

This is why it's so important to 'reseed' your gut with fermented foods and probiotics when you're taking an antibiotic. If you aren't eating fermented foods, you most likely need to supplement with a probiotic on a regular basis, especially if you're eating a lot of processed foods.

"In parallel with beneficial microbes in the healthy gut, scientists have found thousands of different species of downright pathogenic disease-causing microbes; bacteria, viruses, fungi and other microbes. But as long as the good ones predominate in your gut, they control all the pathogens... They keep them in small colonies and they don't allow them to proliferate.

Every course of antibiotics tends to wipe out the beneficial bacteria and that gives a window of opportunity for the pathogens to proliferate, to grow uncontrolled, and to occupy new niches in your gut. The beneficial flora recovers, but different species of it take between two weeks to two months to recover in the gut and that's a window of opportunity for various pathogens to overgrow.

*What I see in the families of autistic children is that **100 percent of mom's of autistic children have abnormal gut flora** and health problems related to that. But then I look at grandmothers on the mother's side, and I find that the grandmothers also have abnormal gut flora, but much milder."*

In essence, what we have is a generational build-up of abnormal gut flora, with each generation becoming ever more prone to being further harmed from the use of antibiotics—and vaccines as well, which I'll discuss in a moment.

Bottle-Feeding and Antibiotics Exact a Heavy Toll

Adding injury to insult is the significant decrease in breastfeeding. We now know that breastfed babies develop entirely different gut flora compared to bottle-fed babies. Infant formula never was, and never will be a healthy replacement to breast milk, for a number of reasons; altered gut flora being one of them.

Dr. Campbell discovered that a large percentage of the mothers of autistic children were bottle-fed. Then, as they received many courses of antibiotics throughout their childhood, the abnormalities in their gut flora further deepened.

"Ever since antibiotics were prescribed, particularly from the 50s and 60s, they were prescribed for every cough and sneeze. They really over-prescribed antibiotics. And with every course of antibiotics, the abnormalities in the gut flora would get deeper and deeper in these girls.

And then, at the age of 15, 16, these ladies were put on a contraceptive pill... [which] have a devastating effect on the gut flora. Nowadays ladies are taking it for quite a few years before they're ready to start their family."

So, to recap, bottle-feeding along with over-use of antibiotics and use of the contraceptive pill set the stage for increasingly abnormal gut flora with each passing generation. Then, add to that a diet of processed junk food and excessive consumption of high fructose corn syrup and you have a prescription for disaster in terms of intestinal health.

It's important to realize that processed foods and sugar almost exclusively feed pathogens in your digestive system, allowing them to proliferate.

"Many of these modern factors created a whole plethora of young ladies in our modern world who have quite deeply abnormal gut flora by the time they are ready to have their first child. This is the abnormal gut flora that they are passing through their children," she explains.

"So these babies acquire abnormal gut flora from the start and while the baby is breastfed the baby is receiving protection because whatever is in the mother's blood will be in her milk. Women who have abnormal gut flora would have immune factors in their blood, which they have developed against their own gut flora to protect them. These immune factors will be in their milk.

While the baby is breastfed, despite the fact that the baby has acquired abnormal gut flora from the mom, there will be some protection. But as soon as the breastfeeding stops that protection stops as well. That is the time when the abnormalities in the gut flora really flourish and the child starts sliding down into autism or ADHD or ADD or any other learning disability or physical problems such as diabetes type 1, for example, and celiac disease or other autoimmune conditions, or... asthma, eczema and other physical problems. That's where this epidemic comes from."

Changes are Urgently Needed

Unfortunately, all the factors that create abnormal gut flora are getting increasingly more prevalent, across the globe. This means that the next generation of young women having children will have

even worse gut flora than their mothers, so the proportion of GAPS children being born predisposed to develop autism will be *even higher!*

"Our authorities need to understand that, and they need to be ready for that," Dr. Campbell warns.

The Role of Vaccines

As Dr. Campbell explains, babies are born not only with a sterile gut, but also with immature immune systems. And establishment of normal gut flora in the first 20 days or so of life plays a *crucial role* in appropriate maturation of your baby's immune system. Hence, babies who develop abnormal gut flora are left with compromised immune systems.

"Vaccinations have been developed, originally, for children with perfectly healthy immune systems," she says. *"GAPS children are NOT fit to be vaccinated with the standard vaccination protocol."*

Her book [Gut and Psychology Syndrome](#) contains an entire chapter outlining what health care professionals need to do to improve the vaccination strategy, because the standard vaccination protocol is bound to damage GAPS babies.

"It's a matter of the last straw breaking the camel's back," she explains. *"So if the child is damaged enough, the vaccine can provide that last straw. But if it doesn't provide that last straw in a particular child, then it will get the child closer to the breaking point."*

She also points out another risk factor of vaccines:

"What we also have to understand is that the pharmaceutical industry cannot patent natural viruses, natural bacteria or any microbe that nature has created. They have to genetically modify them before they can patent them," she says.

"So these vaccines contain genetically modified viruses, genetically modified microbes. We still haven't got enough data to know what exactly they're doing to the human body, and what exactly these genes are doing to our gut flora in these children."

How to Identify GAPS

Fortunately, it is possible to identify GAPS within the first weeks of your baby's life, which can help you make better informed decisions about vaccinations, and about how to proceed to set your child on the path to a healthy life.

One of the KEY issues is to screen all children BEFORE they are immunized, and if they have the metabolic characteristics of GAPS, they should NOT be immunized until that is reversed. This simple measure could prevent unnecessary and tragic trauma in hundreds of thousands of families. In all likelihood there are far more children being harmed by vaccines than being helped at this point. By simply modifying the process one could radically reduce the risk of a child developing an illness on the autism spectrum.

Dr. Campbell describes the entire process in [her book](#).

In her practice, she starts out by collecting a complete health history of the parents, and their gut health is assessed. Then, within the first few days of life, the stool of the child can be analyzed to determine the state of her gut flora, followed by a urine test to check for metabolites, which can give you a picture of the state of your child's immune system.

"Now we have excellent tests that find chemicals produced by various species of microbes in the gut," she says. "... So by analyzing urine, indirectly we can say what kind of species of microbes are sitting in the gut of the child, or what kind of chemicals they are producing."

*"... If the child has abnormal gut flora we can assume that the child has a compromised immunity, and these children **must not be vaccinated with the standard vaccination protocol** because they simply get damaged by it. They should not be vaccinated."*

The non-invasive tests described in her book are now available in most laboratories around the world, and typically run around \$80-100 each in the US. This is peanuts compared to the incredible expense of treating an autistic child once the damage is done.

"Our children are being used as a market for selling vaccines," Dr. Campbell says. "The children are vaccinated in our Western world, I'm afraid, not for the sake of saving the child but for the sake of making money... It's an extremely sad and worrying situation."

Siblings are Also at High-Risk for Vaccine Damage

Another group of children that may also over-react to vaccinations are siblings of children with autism, severe hyperactivity, obsessive compulsive disorder, mental conditions, or type 1 diabetes.

"Younger siblings of autistic children, and younger siblings of children with all these disabilities should not be vaccinated with the standard vaccination protocol," she warns.

"The immune tests that I was talking about can be repeated every six months or every year for these children. Whenever the child is considered to be perfectly healthy and the immune system shows itself to be perfectly well functioning, only then can a vaccination be considered for these children because we simply cannot take the risk."

Strategies to Restore Health to Children with GAPS and Autism

Dr. Campbell has developed a very effective treatment for GAP children, called GAPS Nutritional Protocol. It is described in great detail in her book, [*Gut and Psychology Syndrome*](#), which is designed to be a self-help book.

"[P]robably tens of thousands of people now, around the world, are saving their children with this program," she says. "... The majority of these people just bought the book, read it, followed the program, and got fantastic results."

In summary, the protocol consists of three elements:

1. **Diet**—the GAPS diet consists of easily-digestible foods that are dense in nutrition, including fermented foods.

According to Dr. Campbell: *"On average, people adhere to the diet a couple of years. It takes two years to drive out the pathogenic flora, to reestablish normal flora in the gut, to heal and seal the damaged gut lining in these people and turn the gut back to being a major source of nourishment for the person instead of being a source of toxicity."*

2. **Food supplements**, including: probiotics and vitamins D and A in the form of cod liver oil, although sun exposure is also an important part for GAPS patients, for proper vitamin D production.
3. **Detoxification**—The GAPS nutritional protocol will naturally clear out most toxins. Dr. Campbell does not use any kind of drugs or chemicals to remove toxins as it can be too drastic for some, and can produce damaging side effects. Instead she recommends [juicing as a gentle but effective way](#) of removing toxic build-up, as well as baths with Epsom salt, sea salt, seaweed powder, apple cider vinegar, and baking soda.

Dr. Campbell discusses many additional and priceless details relating to this protocol, so please, set aside some time to listen to the interview in its entirety, or read through the transcript.

More Information

I have always found that the best health strategy is prevention, and I'm sure many would agree. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Now that we've identified a way to help prevent autism and related neurological and physical damage from manifesting, I can't urge you enough to take this information to heart, and to pay close attention to your gut health well before planning your pregnancy, and to take the simple and relatively inexpensive precautions described by Dr. Campbell that can significantly reduce the chances of your child being harmed.

The avalanche of autism must be curbed—and quickly! And for now the burden rests on you, the parent, to take control of your and your child's health, and to arm yourself with information that can have life-altering ramifications.

If you're pregnant, planning a pregnancy, or know someone who is, I can't recommend [Dr. Campbell's book](#) enough. Buy it for yourself, or as a gift.

You can also find more information on Dr. Campbell's website: www.GAPS.me, and on her blog at www.doctor-natasha.com.

"We have an absolute epidemic of GAPS – Gut and Psychology Syndrome and Gut and Physiology Syndrome, and the number of sufferers are growing," she says. "I'm completely overwhelmed by demands for consultations, and people all over the world need GAPS practitioners..."

So I am preparing a training course for medical practitioners and health practitioners. The first wave of training will be done in September-October in Seattle, Chicago, New York and Dallas.

We will cover the U.S. with a good number of GAPS trained practitioners. This will be people who will be able to take you through the diet, through the whole protocol, and they will run local GAPS groups where all the patients and other GAPS people will be able to come weekly or fortnightly to exchange recipes, exchange news, help each other, give each other moral support and learn more about GAPS."

Once she's done the trainings in the US, she will continue on to Europe and other parts of the world. If you're a doctor, nutritionist, dietician, osteopath, homeopath or other health practitioner and you're interested in [becoming a certified GAPS practitioner, please see this link](#) for more information.