

POSSIBILITIES FOR AUTISM

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Diets that Heal: What is the Difference in SCD and GAPS?

In my last post, I explained why the terms SCD and GAPS are often used interchangeably – SCD is the original gut-healing diet, and GAPS is a protocol built around the SCD diet. Both diets eliminate the same foods (sweet and starchy carbohydrates) in order to starve the pathogenic bacteria that are associated with autism, digestive diseases and a host of other psychological conditions.

I have followed both SCD and GAPS with my son and myself since 2011. In this post, I will explain the differences in the two.

The two core differences in the SCD diet and the GAPS protocol are:

- The “introductory diets” for SCD and GAPS are both elimination diets, but they are significantly different.
- Since GAPS is a protocol, it requires several healing strategies that are optional on SCD.

The Introductory Diets: SCD vs GAPS

The introductory diets of SCD and GAPS both work through 6 stages starting with a short list of easy-to-digest foods and gradually adding in other foods. Here are the three key differences in these introductory strategies.



On the SCD intro, it's nice to be able to have easy-to-digest foods that aren't soup.

One: The early stages of SCD and GAPS both recommend healing soups. However, SCD allows other meals besides just soup. For example, with SCD, one can have meals with meat/seafood and well cooked vegetables rather than only soup. With GAPS you get variety by using different meats and vegetables in your soups, but soup is your basic food for a while.

Two: The early stages of SCD include some sweet foods such as fruit juice, homemade Jell-o and apple sauce. GAPS does not allow fruit or fruit juice until stage 5. I encourage people to follow the GAPS principle of refraining from fruit/fruit juice if possible. However, sometimes the availability of something sweet in the beginning with SCD can make the transition easier – especially with children who are picky eaters.



Juice popsicles add welcome variety and a bit of sweet to the SCD early introductory diet.



When we added butternut squash, I felt like I'd been run over by a truck.

Three: Carbohydrates from fruit and vegetables are the most common contributor to problematic gut flora and yeast issues. The SCD introductory diet adds in vegetables (and fruits) very slowly allowing you to pinpoint specific vegetables and fruits that you or your child are not ready for. GAPS allows a large number of vegetables from the beginning which can prevent you from discovering certain vegetables/fruits that you/your child are sensitive to or not ready for. For example, when we started the SCD introductory diet and added in butternut squash, I felt like I had been run over by a truck. Had we been on the GAPS introductory diet, I would not have discovered my sensitivity to butternut squash.

The GAPS Protocol

The GAPS protocol includes a number of healing strategies that are all allowed on SCD but not required. Some of those strategies are:

- Fresh squeezed fruit juice is required on GAPS. SCD allows store-bought, not-from-concentrate juice. Fresh squeezed juice is recommended because it is detoxifying. However, for those who are new on the diet, the extra work of making fresh pressed juice can be overwhelming.
- GAPS introduces fermented foods (e.g. sauerkraut) from the beginning of the introductory diet. Fermented foods have glutamine which can be powerful in healing the gut. However, glutamine can be neuro-provoking in some people and lead to regressions. I encourage people to be tested for excess glutamine and proceed very carefully if they are going to introduce large amounts of glutamine-containing foods such as fermented foods and broth.
- The GAPS protocol recommends certain supplements. These supplements can be used with SCD if desired.

My recommendation

We have used both the SCD diet (and its intro) as well as the entire GAPS protocol with its unique introductory diet. I found SCD much easier to follow because it allowed non-soup meals and juice/apple sauce in the early stages. We really enjoyed the fresh pressed juice recommended by GAPS, but I eventually got burned out making fresh-pressed juice multiple times a day. In addition, the SCD introductory diet allowed me to find sensitivities that we would have otherwise missed.

Soon after we started following GAPS my son developed chronic nausea. I didn't suspect GAPS to be involved because GAPS is a gut-healing protocol. It took many months of troubleshooting to bring the nausea under control. Now that I understand that glutamine can be counterproductive for some people, I look back with 20/20 hindsight and wonder if the glutamine in the fermented foods I used in GAPS contributed to the nausea.

My suggestion is that parents start with the straight SCD diet then add in the GAPS strategies as feasible:

- Though fruit and/or juice is available during the early stages of SCD, hold off on adding them for as long as you can because they feed yeast and continue to foster a sweet tooth. You can always add fruit/juice in to help with a picky eater or use them as special treats.
- Make fresh pressed juices as time allows. Otherwise, simply use SCD-allowed store-bought juice.
- Get tested for excess glutamine before adding daily servings of fermented foods and large amounts of broth.
- Feel free to add in the supplements recommended by GAPS or your health practitioner at any time.

My family has now been using one form or another of SCD and GAPS since 2011. With this experience, I now take the flexibility of SCD and apply the parts of the GAPS protocol that make sense for us. SCD and GAPS have transformed our lives and can transform yours too.

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