



## **Sulfur Sensitivity and Autism – Part 1**

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The issue of sulfur sensitivity (mistakenly referred to as sulfur allergy) to medications or nutritional products that contain sulfur amino acids or other sulfur or sulfate supplements is a confusing topic. Let's tackle the 'sulfur allergy' question first.

Sulfur is a natural element in the earth's crust, and is found as element 16 on the periodic table of elements. It is found as a crystalline yellow solid in nature, and is referred to as brimstone. As pure sulfur or complexed with minerals it has a wide variety of roles in the natural world. In the body it makes up the sulfur component of methionine and cysteine, two critical amino acids in the methylation cycle. The methylation cycle is very important for brain chemical production, immune support, attention and focusing, higher cognitive function and cellular detoxification.

An allergy to sulfur is not possible as it is an integral component of our body. When people use the word sulfur allergy, in medicine this generally indicates an allergy to sulfa drugs such as Septra and Bactrim and in these drugs the specific chemical called sulfamethoxazole is the culprit. What happens is when these drugs are ingested the chemical constituents break-down and interact with endogenous (self) proteins which can trigger allergic sensitization. People with 'sulfa' allergies can have cross-reactivity to other drugs such as certain diuretics, diabetes medications and anti-inflammatory medications such as Celebrex.

If a known allergy has been determined to sulfamethoxazole this doesn't mean an individual would have reactions to sulfur or sulfate containing supplements such as taurine, Epsom salt, n-acetyl-cysteine, or even drugs like DMPS or DMSA (two sulfur containing medications commonly used for heavy metal detoxification therapy). However, in the case of DMSA or DMPS a test dose (using a small amount from a capsule) in the mouth to see if an adverse reaction of inflammation in the gums occurs is not a bad idea prior to using one of these medications long-term. In rare cases, some people will show an adverse reaction.

Sulfites are preservatives found in certain foods, beverages or medications. Some people can have sensitivity reactions to sulfites that lead to itching, rash or respiratory distress. Approximately 1% of the general population in the United States has a sulfite sensitivity while the rate in asthmatics is higher – upwards of 10%.

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