

Abstract

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Vitamin B12 Optic Neuropathy in Autism.

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BACKGROUND: Dietary vitamin B(12) deficiency was identified as a cause of partially reversible optic neuropathy in 3 autistic children. All of the affected children presented with gradual visual loss.

FINDINGS: Examination revealed optic atrophy, and further questioning regarding diet revealed that all 3 children had severe food selectivity and highly stereotyped diets that resulted in an almost total lack of animal products in their diets. Vitamin B(12) levels were low in all 3 children. Treatment with intramuscular vitamin B(12) and normalization of vitamin B(12) levels resulted in improvement of visual functioning in all 3 children.

CONCLUSIONS: These cases illustrate that food selectivity, a known complication of autism, can result in vitamin deficiency that can cause visual loss and optic atrophy. Physicians must have a high index of suspicion when evaluating children with autism and visual loss to detect this rare cause of optic atrophy.

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