

## **Tips for Making Sound Treatment Decisions**

To date, there remains no one best treatment approach that fits every child with autism. Before deciding upon a treatment approach, it is important to weigh the risks vs. benefits of an approach and consult with your child's physician.

In the best interest of your time, your resources, and most importantly—your child, it is also helpful to become more knowledgeable in how to critically evaluate information and claims about autism treatments that you may find on the internet or otherwise.

It is helpful to consider the following basic guidelines:

- Search for information on *.org*, *.edu*, or *.gov* websites as these designations lend themselves to credible, peer-reviewed material more frequently than material found on commercial (*.com*) websites
- Information should be supported by independent research (meaning research is not funded or conducted by those who have a vested financial interest in the outcome of the study) that has been published in peer-reviewed journals (i.e. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, etc....)
- Beware of resources utilizing the testimonials of other parents as a means of marketing a treatment approach—this strategy is generally considered unethical conduct because it preys upon the emotional vulnerability of parents.
- While parents may need to make multiple adjustments before finding the best treatment approach for their individual child, introducing multiple approaches simultaneously will make it difficult to determine the effectiveness of a given treatment strategy. The introduction of new approaches should be staggered by a 4-6 week interval in order to determine their effectiveness.
- Beware of alternative treatment approaches that insist that they be combined with a proven approach in order to be effective. This strategy is often used in an attempt to “piggyback” positive outcomes on the effectiveness of the research-based approach.
- Investigate potential conflicts of interest by inquiring of providers that require laboratory services (blood, urine, hair samples, etc...) and who also prescribe and dispense in-house treatments whether they utilize an internal laboratory. If so, ask if samples can be sent to an unaffiliated and independently contracted laboratory service for unbiased testing.

The following web pages contain additional guidance for families seeking to make educated treatment decisions:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-- <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/treatment.html>

National Institute of Mental Health--<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/treatment-options.shtml>