

NATURAL Solutions



ADHD

by Holly Lucille, ND, RN

Adding up the numbers can stop you in your tracks. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 6.1 million children between the ages of 2 and 17 are diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. Marked by an inability to focus or pay attention, and a pattern of acting impulsively, 6 out of 10 (62 percent) of them take medication for the disorder. That represents 1 out of 20 kids in the US! In up to 60 percent of these cases, this neurobehavioral disorder continues into adulthood and it's often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

To further complicate the diagnosis, not all ADHD is the same.

There are three main categories of ADHD:

① **PREDOMINANTLY HYPERACTIVE/IMPULSIVE**

② **PRIMARILY INATTENTIVE** — lack of focus and attention without hyperactivity

③ **COMBINATION** — The exhibition of inattention and impulsivity

Getting a proper diagnosis of the type of ADHD, as well as understanding all the options for treatment, can save children and adults from low self-esteem, social problems, and an inferior quality of life. For those who think that synthetic drugs are the only solution, there is good news. Effective nutritional solutions for ADHD can help both children and adults with ADHD.

NOURISHMENT MATTERS

Since ADHD is a neurobehavioral disorder, it makes sense to rely on brain-healthy foods for better focus and stamina. It's well documented that sugary substances lead to cravings for more sugar and a "sugar high" that leads to greater impulsivity even in someone not challenged with the disorder.

A high-protein, low-sugar diet free from food additives like artificial colors and flavors can help manage symptoms. Beans, lean organic meat, organic eggs, and nuts are all good protein sources. Skip or try to limit any sugar-based foods including those with hidden sugars from things like corn syrup. Another hidden trigger is food additives, many of which are banned in Europe. A partial list of artificial colors linked to ADHD includes Blue #1 and #2 food coloring, as well as Green #3, Orange B, Red #3 and #40, and Yellow #5 and #6. Pay close attention to food labels and avoid these additives—a task that is easier to do if you stick to whole and fresh foods. Also, eliminate "white" foods, as in white flour and white rice—stick to whole grains instead.

GO FISH!

Since omega-3 fatty acids are essential for someone dealing with ADHD, the answer for this nutritional component may seem simple: Eat fish. Yet most people don't eat enough fish, or enough of the right types of fish, to get results. Research shows that the health benefits from fish come from two specific omega-3 fatty acids—

icosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Since fish often doesn't make a regular appearance on the dinner table, many people turn to fish and krill oil supplements to get these two vital fats. The problem is, most fish oils are processed using heat and chemical solvents which make the fatty acids less absorbable and bioavailable to cells. What has been shown to be superior is DHA from the head of Atlantic salmon and obtained using a unique enzyme and cold-water extraction. This type of processing provides natural DHA and EPA in a form the body can use. It also gives the bonus of health-promoting phospholipids and peptides in addition to the omega-3s.

This approach to obtaining omega-3s allows someone with ADHD to reap the benefits of the omega fatty acids without the worries of heavy metals, rancidity, and even fishy burps that often accompany other types of fish and krill oil supplements.

How well do omega-3s work for kids with ADHD? One Dutch study found that higher blood levels of DHA correlated with better spelling and reading scores. Another clinical study involving 8- to 10-year-old boys showed that DHA supplementation improved attention span and may have helped play a role in rewriting cortical attention networks in the brain in just eight weeks. And 7- to 9-year-olds showed improved reading scores after DHA supplementation. Parents also noted better overall behavior. With these impressive findings, it makes sense to introduce omega-3s into a child's regimen as early as possible.

MORE SUPPLEMENTS THAT SHINE

There are a multitude of botanicals that deliver when it comes to ADHD. Consider adding one or more of the following to your child's daily routine:

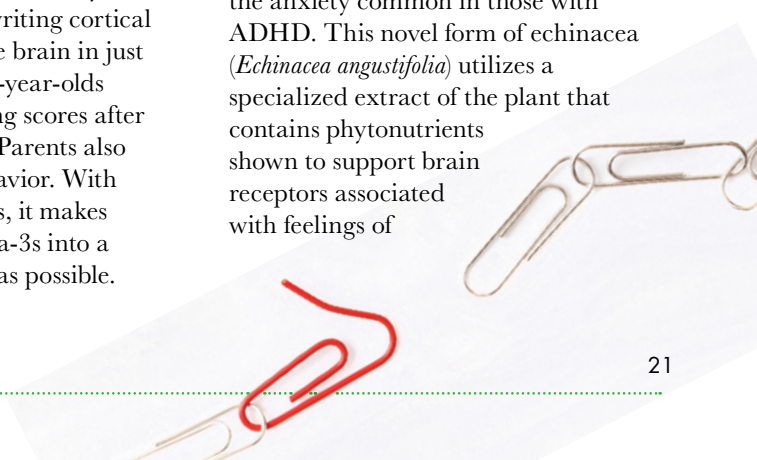
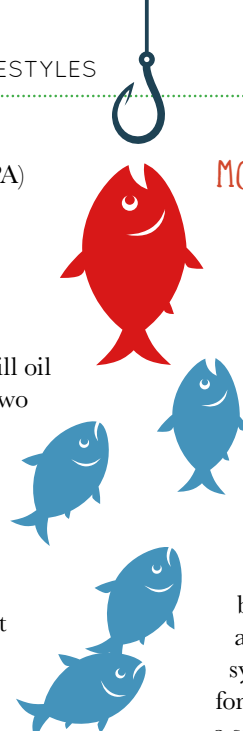
Saffron and Curcumin

The first is saffron, a spice that many people know because of the unique flavor it adds to food. In a six-week randomized, double-blind study, children between the ages of 6 and 17 were given either a synthetic drug most often prescribed for ADHD or 20 to 30 milligrams of a saffron supplement. The treatments worked equally well as rated by the Teacher and Parent ADHD Rating Scale. Children taking the saffron received the same benefit and skipped the side effects associated with the drug. Adding a highly absorbable form of curcumin such as BCM-95 (Curcugreen) enhances saffron's antidepressant and neuroprotective benefits in those with ADHD.



Echinacea

While most people equate echinacea with immunity, this herb also contains a unique compound that influences brain chemistry and can reduce the anxiety common in those with ADHD. This novel form of echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*) utilizes a specialized extract of the plant that contains phytonutrients shown to support brain receptors associated with feelings of





relaxation. Taking this herb in a tablet form, which contains the clinically studied, unique extract of *Echinacea angustifolia* called EP107, can spare the drowsiness and common side effects that go with anti-anxiety medications. One study showed that when it was given to participants experiencing anxiety, there was a decrease in their measurable anxiety levels. These benefits not only lasted during the remainder of the seven-day trial, they persisted for the following two weeks—and none of the children experienced side effects.

Adaptogens - Rhodiola and Ashwagandha

Rhodiola has been clinically shown to boost focus and concentration, promote resilience, and reduce fatigue under a variety of circumstances. Who has a more hectic schedule than physicians on the night shift? A well-known clinical study showed that even under these circumstances, rhodiola improved total mental performance. From test-taking to help in reducing feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression, rhodiola appears to have a direct, positive action on brain chemistry and the way it affects focus and mood.

Another adaptogen that has a positive effect on brain chemistry is ashwagandha. Extensive research has proven its ability to help stabilize the body's response to stress, improve focus, and reduce anxiety without side effects. Combining rhodiola and ashwagandha in a synergistic formula helps support the stresses caused by ADHD.

French Grape Seed and Pine Bark

Focus and concentration can be a real problem for people with ADHD. An absorbable French grape seed extract that contains small molecular weight oligomeric proanthocyanidins (OPCs) has been scientifically shown to provide results. With anti-inflammatory and



What are some SIGNS of ADHD?

Diagnosis is a process as there is no single test to determine ADHD. Children or adults receive an ADHD diagnosis when they show six or more symptoms in at least two settings over six months. If you suspect you or your child suffers from ADHD, work with a qualified health professional. Examples of ADHD symptoms include:

- Constantly in motion
- Squirms and fidgets
- Doesn't seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Difficulty finishing tasks
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others
- Easily distracted
- Excessive talking
- Avoids tasks that require sustained mental effort

antioxidant actions that preserve glutathione and other natural compounds in the brain and nervous system, grape seed extract is a winning answer for ADHD. In a placebo-controlled, double-blind study published in the *European Child & Adolescent Psychology*, OPCs boosted attention span and caused a noticeable reduction in hyperactivity after just one month. But with known adulteration of cheap ingredients like peanut skins in some grape seed supplements, and large OPC molecules that can't be absorbed by the body, it's imperative to choose a tannin-free, low molecular weight supplement like French grape seed VX1.

Next, consider adding a pine bark extract. In a placebo-controlled, double-blind study, children were evaluated using a series of rating scales and basic psychiatric examinations.



After one month, the researchers found that the children assigned the pine bark extract showed improved attention and a 20 percent decrease in hyperactivity while those assigned the placebo showed no improvement in behavior.

NATURAL ALTERNATIVES ABOUND

With many parents adverse to the stimulant medications commonly prescribed for ADHD, turning to a healthy diet combined with herbal nutrients to improve focus and attention is a welcome alternative. Understanding all the options available, plus knowing how to assess the effectiveness of what herbs and nutrients to look for brings welcome, healthy choices for anyone experiencing ADHD. ■



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