

ADD/ADHD and Chiropractic

Finding Focus with Chiropractic

In the United States, 11% of school-aged children (age 4-17) have received an ADHD diagnosis; a number which has increased dramatically over the past 15 years. As a result, 6.1% of school-aged children are taking medications for ADHD and this number continues to rise. The average age of diagnosis is age 7, with boys 2.3 times more likely to be diagnosed than girls.



Essence of Life Spinal Care

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The *vast majority* of ADD / ADHD cases should not be considered disorders but rather **states of imbalance** in our *nervous system*.

What are the classic symptoms of ADD/ADHD?

The three primary characteristics of ADD/ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. These characteristics can show up in some of the following ways:

- **Difficulty concentrating or holding attention**
- **Easily distracted / trouble maintaining focus**
- **Impulsive behavior / inability to control emotions**
- **Constant squirming or fidgeting**
- **May have a short temper**
- **Trouble staying organized or planning ahead**

What is the cause of ADD/ADHD?

The vast majority of ADD/ADHD cases should not be considered disorders but rather states of imbalance in our nervous system. Our autonomic nervous system (ANS) is divided into two divisions: the sympathetic nervous system, responsible for our "fight or flight" response and the parasympathetic nervous system, responsible for relaxation and digestion.

Irritation to the nervous system from physical, chemical and emotional stressors can result in "sympathetic dominance" — a state of being where your child is constantly in the "fight or flight" response, leading to hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity.

Children have tremendous neuroplasticity; the earlier nervous system balance is achieved the greater their ability to "re-wire" their interaction with their environment.

Traditional medical management of ADD/ADHD

The most common traditional medical approach to ADD/ADHD is the administration of nervous system stimulant drugs. While masking symptoms may provide some immediate satisfaction, many side effects can occur, including nervousness, anxiety, personality alterations, vision problems, psychosis, suicidal thoughts, sleep problems, digestive issues, inhibited growth and many others. The effects of psychostimulant medications are also not sustainable in the long term, resulting in stronger doses being prescribed over time, which can lead to potentially more severe, unwanted side effects.

The chiropractic approach to ADD/ADHD

Chiropractors understand that the spine is a gateway which allows for proper communication between brain and body. Physical stressors such as birth trauma or intrauterine constraint, chemical stressors such as medication use or poor diet and emotional stressors such as anxiety or sleep troubles can all lead to spinal "subluxations", which are dysfunctions in movement of the vertebrae in your child's spine, causing disruption of proper nervous system communication.

This dysfunction compromises the normal functioning of nerves and can negatively influence your overall health and wellbeing; in the case of ADD/ADHD, contributing to a state of sympathetic dominance. By correcting subluxations (often seen in the upper neck region of children with ADD/ADHD), your chiropractor will help restore balance to the nervous system and begin to activate the parasympathetic response in favor of sympathetic dominance. Your chiropractor can also be a good resource for other lifestyle modifications to support nervous system balance.

Action Steps For Parents

There are many *natural choices* you can make as a parent to help better regulate your child's nervous system.

By removing lifestyle and environmental stressors, as well as addressing the physical and neurological components with chiropractic care, parents often **notice significant improvements in ADD/ADHD symptoms**.

Here are some action steps you can take today:

- Have your child evaluated by a pediatric chiropractor.
- Rule out possible food allergies by eliminating dairy, gluten, corn and soy from your child's diet, or visit a holistic doctor who can further evaluate these potential intolerances.
- Focus on organic and natural food choices, free of preservatives, dyes, chemical pesticides, artificial sweeteners and additives.
- Reduce sugars as much as possible from your child's diet, as sugar feeds the sympathetic nervous system.
- Use only natural cleaning products and natural toiletries in your home.
- Have your water tested and filter out any contaminants found.
- Ask your trusted healthcare provider to recommend proper supplementation, which may include fish oils, vitamin D, probiotics, multivitamins and antioxidants.
- Encourage as much exercise and outdoor time as possible.
- Limit time spent on electronic devices such as television, computers, tablets and phones. Instead, focus on balancing activities which require utilization of both sides of the brain.
- **Don't give up!** Make lifestyle changes and stick to them; changes will start happening but they may take some time.

