

Help Children with Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD or ADHD)

KEY WORDS

attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, Ritalin, stimulants, Omega-3 fatty acids, fish oil, flax oil, Adderall, DHA, EPA, phosphatidylserine, phospholipids, gluten free diet, DMAE, L-tyrosine, taurine, phosphatidylserine, grape seed, anxiety, stress, restlessness, mood, depression, brain, neurological, focus, concentration

There is not much worse in life than being told that there may be something “wrong” with your child. Our children are precious to us and we have a great deal of anxiety over their welfare and future. When our children start to experience problems with school, and sometimes behavior as well, these anxieties can kick into high gear. There are so many well-meaning authority figures fueling our fears, and drug companies telling us a little pill will fix everything. But that is not always the truth.

In this Terry Talks Nutrition, we are going to look at natural ways to help parents and children overcome the challenges of Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) so that they can better explore the gift of this trait instead of struggling with the downside.

Difference? Or Disease?

I do not think it is legitimate to identify learning and behavior *differences* as a “disease” or “disorders.”

Many respected doctors, researchers, and educators believe that the problems we call Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are merely more extreme points on an entirely *normal* continuum. Thom Hartman, noted psychotherapist and author, writes in his book “The Edison Gene: ADHD and the Gift of the Hunter Child” that ADD/ADHD is *not* a disorder but a trait

that provided valuable survival skills for hunter-gatherer societies (i.e., high activity levels, quick decision making, risk taking, and constant monitoring of the environment for changes – which we call “distractibility” today). And in his book “ADHD and Secrets of Success” he points out that *nearly all* successful entrepreneurs are born “hunters” (i.e., what we label as “ADHD”).

It is also true that our *environment* and *attitudes* promote attention and activity issues in children. For example, our sedentary lifestyle leads us to view children who can’t sit still as abnormal. We expose kids to six types of multimedia experiences simultaneously, and then wonder why they can’t pay attention to a teacher at a plain black chalkboard. Certain artificial ingredients in foods, lack of healthy, uninterrupted sleep, and a dearth of exercise can interact to cause problems in children already wired to behave in more active and impulsive manners.

So while I don’t think we should label and stigmatize these children (and adults!), I do believe that there are ways we can improve health and reduce some of the issues associated with these traits.

Many parents are not in favor of stimulant medications such as Ritalin® or Adderall, which can have *significant* side effects, such as sleep interference and growth retardation. They want to help their children focus and concentrate – but prefer to avoid the drugs altogether, or find alternatives to the drugs to use when school is not in session and they don’t give the medications.

Nutrition and ADHD

While study results are mixed, most experts agree that dietary changes can sometimes be helpful. I strongly believe that it is important to eliminate gluten-containing foods, foods with artificial flavors, sweeteners, colors and preservatives, and refined sugars from children’s diets. Instead, I encourage parents to give their children a low carbohydrate (rated 50 and below on the Glycemic Index), high quality protein diet: fish, eggs, low fat meats, chicken and real

To your good health,
Terry... Naturally



butter (**never margarine**). Also important are healthy fats, such as olive oil and flax seed oil. These oils are a source of healthy Omega-3 fatty acids. Many studies have found that low levels of omega fatty acids are often found in children with hyperactivity, depression, and other ADD symptoms. Making changes in the diet to increase intake of these important nutrients has been found to reduce hyperactive behavior and improve learning ability.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids, Phospholipids and ADHD

Omega fatty acids are highly concentrated in the brain, so it is not surprising that they are so important for memory, focus and behavior. In addition to olive and flax oil, fatty fish is also an important food source for these nutrients. While I certainly encourage everyone to consume plenty of fresh fish in their diets, I do realize it is not always a favorite of children. You also have to be concerned that some fatty fish are notorious for mercury content, which is especially harmful to children. Therefore, I recommend supplemental Omega-3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) from salmon bound to phospholipids in a tablet dosage form. This process, called “vectorization,” increases the absorption of Omega-3 fatty acids about 50 times that of fish oil. In fish oil, the DHA

More...

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and EPA are transported by triglycerides, which are very poor carriers of these important essential fatty acids. Phospholipids, on the other hand, are excellent carriers of DHA and EPA. This means you can give therapeutic amounts of Omega-3 fatty acids in a small tablet instead of multiple large softgels or spoonfuls of fishy liquid oil. Additionally, these naturally-occurring phospholipids are themselves extremely healthy. One type of phospholipid called phosphatidylserine, has several clinical studies on its impact on focus, attention, memory and mood.

Other Important Nutrient Formulas

There are many nutrients, including DMAE, L-tyrosine, taurine, phosphatidylserine, grape seed, and specific vitamins which have been shown to be of benefit in the treatment of ADHD. They influence different pathways, which is why I like to recommend them in a combination formula. Vitamin B, the amino acid L-tyrosine, and DMAE aid in the function of neurotransmitters, which are messengers in the brain. Phosphatidylserine, which we discussed in conjunction with Omega-3 fatty acids, is a specific kind of phospholipid that is important for cell membranes in the brain, as well as helping to create neurotransmitters that are important for memory, attention and focus. In clinical trials of children with ADD, phosphatidylserine was able to improve attention and reduce symptoms. In fact, 11 of 18 children receiving phosphatidylserine had *no further* ADD symptoms at all. In addition to this, the herb rhodiola has long been used for its ability to increase focus, concentration and memory, especially during stressful times (such as final exam testing for students). I discuss these and other nutrients in my article, [Natural Solution for ADD and ADHD](#), which is available on the [terrytalksnutrition.com](#) website.

Stress and Anxiety

It has been frequently reported that people with ADD/ADHD (both adults and children) have an

increased risk of emotional disturbances as well, particularly depression, social phobias, and anxiety. Some studies have found that girls with ADD/ADHD are more likely than boys to suffer from anxiety. Whether this is a component of the trait or the result of social feedback and academic difficulties causing distress, relieving anxiety improves mood and concentration.

To this end I recommend a specialized Echinacea extract from *Echinacea angustifolia*. Researchers at the Academy of Science in Hungary discovered that certain plants of this species, when grown in the proper environment, and harvested and processed in a specific way, yield an extract high in certain plant compounds which bind to brain receptors and trigger feelings of calm and relaxation. This extract, unlike prescription medications, *does not* cause any significant side effects and is safe for school-aged children. Dosage is extremely important, however. More is not better – **only 20 mg at a time and no more**, is all that is necessary for beneficial effects. In fact, taking more than 20 mg per dose can cancel out the anxiety-relieving properties.

Not Just Surviving, but Thriving!

The world is a richer place because no two individuals are the same. Yes, it can be challenging if your children have traits identified as attention deficit and/or hyperactivity, but as they grow and mature, some of these behaviors may even come to be seen as unique gifts of energy, spontaneity, risk-taking and creativity. The goal is to promote healthy brain function, improve mood, enhance self-esteem and avoid *stigmatizing* kids that they are somehow less than others. In fact, they may well be so much more! Perhaps the greatest inventor in history, Thomas Edison, had what we would now call ADHD. You might recognize a few other notables who were either “diagnosed” or whose biographies lead us to believe they had these traits as well: Babe Ruth, Benjamin Franklin, Walt Disney, the Wright Brothers, Andrew Carnegie,

Albert Einstein, and even the singer, Cher. With the help of supportive teachers and parents, healthy diet, and supplements improving focus and attention, children with this trait can lead a more relaxed, comfortable, and productive life. With ADHD behavior refocused, children are free to be what they are meant to be! TM

For ADD/ADHD brain support look for a formula with these ingredients:

Omega-3 Phospholipid Peptide Complex	292 mg
Containing Phospholipids, Omega-3 [DHA (docosahexaenoic) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic)] and hydrolyzed peptides extracted from Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), in a balanced ratio as found naturally in salmon; not chemically altered or artificially spiked with DHA/EPA	

For ADD/ADHD focus look for a formula with these ingredients:

Vitamin B6 (as pyridoxine HCL)	5 mg
DMAE (as dimethylaminoethanol bitartrate)	50 mg
DHA™ (as docosahexaenoic acid)	100 mg
Phosphatidylserine (soy)	30 mg
Rhodiola (<i>Rhodiola rosea</i>) Root Extract standardized to contain >5% rosavins (rosavins and salidroside)	25 mg
Grape Seed (<i>Vitis vinifera</i>) Extract standardized to contain 95% polyphenols and 65% OPC's (oligomeric proanthocyanidin complex)	25 mg
L-Tyrosine	25 mg
N-Acetyl-L-Cysteine (NAC)	15 mg
L-Taurine	15 mg

For ADD/ADHD anxiety look for a formula with these ingredients:

Narrow-leaved Coneflower Root (<i>Echinacea angustifoliae radix</i>) Extract standardized for biochemical fingerprint of proprietary echinacosides	20 mg
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