

ADHD – A NATUROPATHIC APPROACH

The causes of ADHD are not known definitively, but significant amounts of evidence suggest that there is an environmental component to the condition. With increasing frequency, food and food additives have been implicated in the condition. The following represents comprehensive advice. Every child is unique and may require an individualized version of the following restrictions.

Dietary Suggestions

As many as half of ADD/ADHD children have fewer behavioral problems when put on a diet free of substances such as artificial flavoring, food colorings, preservatives, MSG, caffeine, sugar, and chocolate.

The following are highly recommended for removal (permanently or temporarily) from the diet:

- Any food with food colorings, especially yellow and red
- Dairy products, especially cow's milk
- Yellow foods, especially corn or squash, bananas are okay
- Fruit juices
- Sugar and chocolate (cut intake by 90%)
- Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame or NutraSweet
- Processed meats
- Fried foods (cut intake by 90%)
- Salicylates are often implicated in ADD/ADHD. These are tricky to eliminate from the diet because they occur naturally as well as being used as additives. Salicylates are found in almonds, pears, apricots, apples, bananas, blueberries,

cherries, cucumbers, grapes, grapefruits, lemons, melon, nectarines, oranges, peaches, plums, prunes, raisons, raspberries, peas, green peppers, hot peppers, pickles, tomatoes. **START BY BEING AWARE OF HOW OFTEN THESE FOODS ARE INCLUDED IN THE DIET, THEIR QUANTITY CAN BE MODIFIED FROM THERE.**

- Eliminating wheat and gluten as well as casein, the protein found in dairy, has been found to be extremely helpful

What is the Issue?

Some 5,000 additives are used in the US including anticaking agents (e.g., calcium silicate), antioxidants (e.g., BHT, BHA), bleaching agents (e.g., benzoyl peroxide), colorings (e.g., artificial azo dye derivatives, particularly the yellow dye tartrazine), flavorings (emulsifiers, mineral salts), preservatives (e.g., benzoates, nitrates, sulfites), thickeners, and vegetable gums. Each person in the US is estimated to consume 3.5–4.5 kg (8–10 lb) of food additives per year with daily per capita consumption averaging 13–15 g. For the US population, total annual consumption of artificial food colors alone is approximately 45 million kg (100 million lb). Based on his experience with over 1,200 cases in which food additives were linked to learning and behavior disorders, Benjamin Feingold MD has proposed that food additives are a major cause in hyperactivity. According to Feingold, many hyperactive children – perhaps 40-50% – are sensitive to artificial food colors, flavors, and preservatives and to naturally occurring salicylates and phenolic compounds.

Sugar

74% of hyperactive children have been found to have abnormal glucose tolerance curves exhibiting hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), which may promote hyperactivity by increasing adrenaline in response to the low sugar levels. Refined carbohydrate consumption appears to be the major factor in promoting reactive hypoglycemia (i.e low blood sugar resulting from a rapid increase in blood sugar after eating a refined carbohydrate, followed by an immediate and significant drop in blood sugar levels.)

Food Allergies

While artificial colourings and preservatives have been the most common substances causing hyperactivity, no child has been found to be sensitive to these alone. Food allergies or sensitivities can also cause psychological symptoms. A number of studies have demonstrated that to effectively manage ADD/ADHD, both food additives and allergens must be eliminated from the diet.

ADHD Diet Information Tips

- Incorporate some old family recipes, using all natural ingredients, into your family dinners
- Serve a high protein breakfast (60% protein/40% carbohydrates)
- Keep an even balance of protein to carbohydrates for lunch and dinner (50%/50%)
- Eat plenty of raw organic vegetables and fruit
- Cook extra meat while cooking dinner and use it as sandwich meat or make a salad with it

- Make up protein shakes ahead of time and store them in the freezer for breakfast or snacks

Dietary Priorities

- Avoid processed foods and candies
- Avoid sugar
- Avoid food colourings
- Include fish at a minimum of 4 meals per week.