

# The role of natural medicines in the treatment of ADHD

$M = 5.9736 \times 10^{24} \text{ Kg}$

Millions of children take stimulant medicines for attention and hyperactivity problems. However, concerns about side effects, including personality changes, sleep disturbances, appetite suppression and stunted growth, have prompted many parents to look to natural medicine as an alternative. The evidence for the treatment of ADHD with natural medicines is growing fast, side effects are few and recent studies indicate that it may be as effective as conventional treatment with methylphenidate. Natural medicine's success can combat ADHD on multiple fronts addressing its many underlying causes, rather than just focusing on one, like conventional medication does. Conventional medication is life changing for some, but should medicine with so much potential for collateral damage really be the first port of call when safer alternatives are available?

## TREATING ADHD WITH NATURAL MEDICINES

With ADHD, there are three conditions: deficiencies, toxicities and sensitivities – correct these and behaviour will improve.

### Deficiencies:

Children with ADHD have multiple nutritional and hormonal deficiencies, as well as deficiencies in certain chemical messengers in the brain, called neurotransmitters – dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin – which are responsible for factors such as attention, mood, focus, sleep, memory, learning, cognition and motivation. ADHD children frequently have deficiencies in omega 3 fatty acids, magnesium, amino acids (necessary for the production of neurotransmitters), carnitine and iron. Supplementation with some of these nutrients, chosen to address the underlying causes of ADHD, has improved behaviour in these children. A study comparing dietary supplementation with methylphenidate treatment found that dietary supplementation improved attention and self-control in children with ADHD and may be just as effective as methylphenidate.

### Toxicity:

Environmental toxins (eg. mercury, lead, PCBs) cause a wide spectrum of behavioural disorders and are emerging as possible contributors to ADHD. Children with ADHD have higher levels of lead in their bodies than children without ADHD, and studies have found that removing heavy metals using a chelating agent can result in clinical improvement. Get your child tested for heavy metals and other toxins, and treated with chelation therapy to remove these toxins, if necessary.

### Sensitivities:

More often than not, ADHD goes hand-in-hand with allergic disorders (allergies, asthma, eczema), nutritional intolerances and gut problems. Supplementation with omega 3 fatty acids, probiotics and prebiotics, as well as dietary interventions may help combat these problems. A child with ADHD should be tested for allergies and visit a dietician for an appropriate allergen-free diet, an elimination diet (to determine the presence of any food intolerances) and guidelines for avoiding food additives, processed foods, sugar and refined carbs.

ADHD could also present with structural and functional brain abnormalities, causing impulse control problems, making some believe that the reason behind ADHD is purely genetic. However, many scientists say that it is more likely that some individuals are genetically predisposed to certain nutritional deficiencies and an impaired ability to detoxify. The resulting deficiencies, toxicities and sensitivities in these individuals play on their genetic vulnerability to brain abnormalities resulting in ADHD. So, by targeting the deficiencies, toxicities and sensitivities underlying ADHD with nutritional supplementation, behaviour can be improved, without having to resort to purely symptom-treatment with conventional medication, and its undesirable side effects.

## Recommended treatment protocol

**5-HTP:** 7-12 year olds: 1 capsule daily; 12 year olds and above: 1 capsule twice daily

**Acetyl-L-Carnitine:** 7-12 year olds: 1 capsule daily or twice daily; 12 year olds and above: 2 capsules once or twice daily. Take on an empty stomach (30 minutes before meals)

**Magnesium Glycinate:** 4-12 year olds: 1 tablet daily; 12 year olds and above: 1 tablet twice daily. Take with or shortly after meals

**Probiotic –Maximum Potency:** 1-4 year olds: 1 capsule twice daily; 4 year olds and above: 1-2 capsules twice daily. Take on an empty stomach (30 minutes before meals)

**Krill Oil (Neptune-NKO®) Omega 3:** 4-12 years olds: 1 capsule daily; 12 year olds and above: 1 capsule twice daily

**Iron:** Take only if deficient



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