

ADHD & Nutritional Resources

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“Poor nutrition can cause a child or adult with ADHD to become distracted, impulsive, and restless. The right foods, on the other hand, can lessen those symptoms.”

“Poor diet and eating habits do not cause ADHD. And when it comes to controlling impulsivity, inattention, and other symptoms, there is no substitute for medication and behavioral therapy, which are clearly the most effective approaches”

What you can do:

- **Protein intake**

- Lean meats, eggs, beans, nuts, soy, and dairy are used by the body to make neurotransmitters, which help to increase alertness
- Protein also helps to regulate blood sugar; preventing spikes that can worsen hyperactivity
- Protein promotes alertness in the brain
- Eating a protein-rich breakfast can reduce irritability and restlessness side effects from stimulant medications

- Eat **healthy carbohydrates** that are high in fiber and have a lower glycemic index

- Try to get 25-30 grams of fiber daily
- Eating fruits and avoiding fruit juice
- Avoiding fruits that are highly acidic (oranges/grapefruit) as these can affect the absorption of ADHD medications
- Vegetables
- Yogurts, milk (ones without added sugar)
- Cereals and grains- high fiber cereals, pasta (avoid high sugar cereal)

- **Healthy fat intake!**

- Omega 3 fatty acids- some correlation between low levels of omega 3s and ADHD.
 - does take ~3 months to see effects and is still not as effective as stimulant medications
 - EPA and DHA
- Avoiding trans fats, saturated fats
- Omega 3s are also good for cardiovascular health

- **WATER**

- Dehydration can affect cognition and judgment
- Most adults do not drink enough water throughout the day
- Coffee, alcohol, and caffeine can lead to dehydration
- “Good general rule is to drink half your weight in ounces per day. If you are significantly obese, do not drink more than 120 ounces a day. If you are an athlete, make sure to replenish electrolytes after the game or working out.
- Cutting out sugary drinks and juice eliminates about 400 calories a day from the average American diet.”

- Take a **multivitamin** daily, especially if the patient is a picky eater
 - Certain nutritional deficiencies can mimic or worsen ADHD symptoms

- **Other vitamins/supplements**

- If low vitamin B6; supplementation can help with alertness due to increasing the natural production of dopamine
- Zinc- low levels are correlated with inattention; zinc may also help to augment the effects of methylphenidate
- Iron is used to make dopamine in the body; low levels of iron are correlated with more severe cases of ADHD and cognitive deficits
- Magnesium can have a calming effect on the brain
- Ginkgo, ginseng, and Rhodiola rosea may have some cognitive activating effects; may lead to less distractibility and less impulsive behaviors

- **Practicing mindful eating** and intentional eating; trying to better manage ADHD symptoms to avoid binge eating behaviors or impulsive food choices

- **Good spices to cook with:**

- Cinnamon
- Oregano
- Turmeric
- Saffron
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Sage
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Cayenne

What to avoid:

- Try to avoid processed foods as much as possible
 - processed meats, fast foods, high-fat dairy products, and sugary foods – doubled the risk of having an ADHD diagnosis, compared with a healthier diet.
- Try to avoid artificial dyes
- Try to buy organic or local produce that does not use pesticides
 - pesticides, specifically organophosphates, found on fruits and vegetables may be linked to ADHD.
- Mixed opinions on sugar intake; but trying to limit high sugary drinks and “empty” calories to help with overall nutrition and avoid spikes in blood sugar
 - Sugar can increase inflammation in the body

Resources:

- <https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/basic-nutrition/printable-materials-and-handouts>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/best-foods-for-adhd-diet-nutrition/>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-diet-nutrition-sugar/>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-nutrition-health-food-rules/>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-supplements-foods-vitamins/>
- <https://chadd.org/about-adhd/nutrition-and-adhd/>

Shopping list

- <https://listonic.com/adhd-diet-shopping-list/>