

# ADHD DIET

## WHAT IS ADHD?

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is a condition involving inattention and hyperactive-impulsive behavior. Both children and adults can have ADHD, and boys are 3 times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with it.

## WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO ADHD?

This neurological condition is a sign of deeper imbalances occurring within the body. It is necessary to investigate why there is inflammation in the brain (why the brain is "on fire"). For some individuals, this inflammation may be due to dysfunction in the gastrointestinal tract (often called our "second brain"). In other cases, ADHD may be the result of the body lacking the substances it needs for optimal brain function or being overwhelmed by toxic substances which damage or interfere with the brain and nervous system.

### Contributing factors include:

- ◇ **Insufficient Macronutrients:** Protein and fat are critical for brain function. Amino acids derived from protein form our neurotransmitters (which affect our mood and behavior), and fats are vital for to make myelin (the protective coating around nerve fibers).
- ◇ **Insufficient Micronutrients:** The Standard American Diet (SAD) is deficient in the vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids that are essential for a healthy brain and nervous system.
- ◇ **Inflammatory Foods:** Gluten (a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye) and dairy are highly inflammatory foods which can directly influence the brain. In some individuals, opiate-like compounds (gluteomorphins and casomorphins) are formed during the digestion of gluten and dairy which interfere with proper brain function. Many food additives (artificial colors and MSG) are "excitotoxins," which over-stimulate and destroy nerve cells.
- ◇ **Chemical Exposure:** We are continually bombarded by chemicals in the air, in our water, and in our food. We also use them around our homes for pest control, for lawn care, and for freshening the scent of the air. Many of these chemicals are neurotoxic (poisonous or destructive to the nerve tissue). Vaccinations contain chemicals (such as formaldehyde) and heavy metals (such as mercury or aluminum) which are known neurotoxins.
- ◇ **Gastrointestinal Infections:** Parasites and bacterial/yeast overgrowth in the GI tract create inflammation and produce toxic byproducts which impact the brain. Antibiotic use disrupts the normal balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut, and sugar feeds yeast.
- ◇ **Impaired Detoxification:** Genetic mutations may reduce the body's ability to handle toxic substances.

## HOW CAN DIET HELP WITH ADHD?

Research has shown that diet and nutrition affect health, learning and behavior. The foods we eat become the nutrients our brain uses to function. If we don't provide our brain with the proper "fuel" it needs, it is unable to work correctly. A number of foods and food additives have been particularly associated with ADHD symptoms, including gluten, dairy, artificial colors, and additives such as MSG. Removing these foods from the diet typically results in significant improvements in mood and behavior. A good starting place is a gluten-free/casein-free (GFCF) diet or gluten-free/dairy-free (GFDF) diet.



## ADHD SYMPTOMS:

Symptoms can vary between individuals, between girls and boys, and between children and adults.

Kids with ADHD are typically hyperactive, act without thinking, and have trouble focusing.

In adults, trouble managing time, being organized, setting goals, and holding down a job may be signs of ADHD.

### Common symptoms include:

- Easily distracted
- Difficulty staying focused
- Trouble following instructions
- Problems with organization
- Forgetfulness in daily activities
- Acting without thinking
- Inability to sit still and pay attention
- Frequent fidgeting or squirming (in constant motion)
- Difficulty remaining seated
- Failure to finish schoolwork, chores, or other tasks
- Excessive talking
- Poor performance in school
- Trouble waiting for his or her turn

### Resources:

- \* Feingold Diet: <http://www.feingold.org/>
- \* Failsafe Diet: <http://www.failsafediet.com/>
- \* Paleo Parents: <http://paleoparents.com/>
- \* Grain Brain, by Dr. David Perlmutter

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- **REMOVE** foods that inflame or irritate the gut (gluten, dairy, soy, corn, and any other foods that show reactivity on food sensitivity test panels)
- **REMOVE** foods that over-excite the nerve cells (artificial colors such as “FD&C Yellow 5,” artificial sweeteners, MSG, etc.)
- **CHOOSE** organic foods whenever possible to limit pesticide and chemical exposure (especially for meat products and fruits and vegetables on the Environmental Working Group’s “Dirty Dozen” List—www.ewg.org)
- **DRINK** purified/filtered water to avoid chlorine, fluoride, and other harmful chemicals found in tap water
- **PURCHASE** nutrient-dense whole foods rather than refined, processed packaged foods
- **INCLUDE** plenty of healthy fats (coconut oil, olive oil, avocados, etc.) in the diet to give the brain the raw materials it needs
- **AVOID** chemicals in and around the home (pesticides, air fresheners, cigarette smoke, etc.)
- **AVOID** storing food in plastic (use glass, stainless steel, or ceramic containers)
- **TEST** for dysbiosis and infections in the intestinal tract, eliminate them, and repair the damage caused by them
- **REINOCULATE** the gastrointestinal tract with beneficial bacteria (probiotics) and **OPTIMIZE** digestion with enzymes
- **SUPPORT** the brain with critical nutrients (omega 3 fatty acids, choline, inositol, B vitamins, etc.)
- **IMPROVE** detoxification (Epsom salt baths, nutrients like Vitamin B12 that support methylation, etc.)
- **LIMIT** exposure to EMFs (cell phones held against the head, etc.)
- If necessary, **LIMIT** chemical compounds in foods that can be especially problematic for some individuals with ADHD (salicylates, amines, glutamates, oxalates, etc.) and/or use digestive enzymes to aid in the digestion of these substances (i.e. “No-Phenol” for phenols such as salicylates)
- **AVOID** synthetic forms of folic acid in supplements and fortified foods and **SUPPORT** with real folate from whole foods or methylated forms of folate supplements

FOODS TO INCLUDE	FOODS TO AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>ORGANIC / GRASS-FED / PASTURE-RAISED ANIMAL PROTEIN</u></b> (meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs)</li> <li>• <b><u>WHOLE FRUITS &amp; VEGETABLES</u></b> (organic is best)</li> <li>• <b><u>HEALTHY FATS</u></b> (coconut oil, extra virgin olive oil, palm oil, MCT oil, avocado oil, tallow, lard, nuts &amp; seeds, etc)</li> </ul> <p>* <b>Gluten-free grains</b> and <b>legumes</b> can be eaten, if tolerated (soaking, sprouting, or fermenting these makes them easier to digest)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>GLUTEN</u></b> (Wheat, barley, rye, oats) <i>[Note: oats are cross-contaminated with gluten unless specifically certified as gluten-free]</i></li> <li>• <b><u>DAIRY / CASEIN</u></b> (Milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream) <i>[Note: Ghee is clarified butter which is casein-free and may be tolerated by those who react to casein but not to other proteins in dairy]</i></li> <li>• <b><u>REFINED SUGAR</u></b> (White sugar, high fructose corn syrup, agave) <i>[Use natural sweeteners instead: honey, maple syrup, dates, stevia]</i></li> <li>• <b><u>HIGHLY REFINED VEGETABLE OILS</u></b> (Soy, corn, canola, cottonseed)</li> <li>• <b><u>GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GMO) FOODS</u></b> (Soy, corn, canola, etc.)</li> <li>• <b><u>TRANS FATS</u></b> (Hydrogenated oils)</li> <li>• <b><u>ARTIFICIAL COLORS</u></b> (Yellow 5, Red 40, Blue 1, etc.)</li> <li>• <b><u>ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS &amp; MSG</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS</u></b> (Splenda/Sucralose, NutraSweet/Aspartame, Acesulfame K, etc.)</li> <li>• <b><u>FOODS FORTIFIED WITH FOLIC ACID</u></b></li> </ul>