

Natural Alternatives for ADHD

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Prescriptions for Ritalin, Cylert and similar drugs for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder have increased by several hundred percent in the last decade. These drugs may make the children more manageable, but generally do not result in improved school grades and may possibly have unwanted side effects. A hair mineral analysis often provides insightful information related to ADHD and may be used as an additional guide in its correction. As this is a diverse topic, this bulletin will highlight some of the most important correlations.

ADHD - Not A Single Disease

ADHD is not a single 'disease' or condition. This is a catch-all label for a set of symptoms which includes poor attention span, unresponsiveness, distractibility and other criteria that may have many causes. Contributing to the massive increase of diagnoses of this disorder is the fact that school systems may often receive up to several thousand dollars of state or federal money for each child diagnosed with ADHD.

Hair analysis research on ADHD children and adults reveals a variety of biochemical imbalances including hypoglycemia, excess toxic metals, fast oxidation and nutrient deficiencies. At times, both the family and school system contribute to the problem and this also needs to be addressed. Let us review some of the nutritional imbalances that are commonly seen.

Improper Diet

An almost universal finding is that individuals with ADHD are sensitive to sugars in their diet. Simply eliminating dietary sugars, including all sugar-containing products, fruit juices and perhaps fruit, often brings about improvement in the condition. Sugar sensitivity may be a primary cause or a secondary aggravating factor.

The harmful effects of sugar and excess carbohydrates in the diet may be due to its roller-coaster effect on blood sugar levels, or its depleting effect upon B-complex vitamins, zinc and other essential nutrients. Dietary sugars have a harmful effect on adrenal and thyroid glandular activity and often promote chronic yeast conditions. Sugary foods are often substituted for more nutritious foods. This may contribute to nutritional deficiencies that in turn lead to ADHD symptoms.

On a hair mineral test, often the calcium/magnesium ratio will be either greater than 10:1 or less than 3.3:1. In our experience, these are indicators of sugar intolerance and often of a diet excessively high in carbohydrate foods.

Other dietary imbalances may include a lack of protein in the diet, or consumption of stimulants such as caffeine. Aspartame-containing products should also be eliminated from the diet. Its

effects may also mimic symptoms of ADHD.

Toxic Metals

Many hair analyses conducted on children and adults diagnosed with ADHD reveal elevated levels of toxic metals including *copper, mercury, lead and cadmium*. All of these are neurotoxic and can enhance emotional responses and produce symptoms often associated with ADHD. Initially these toxic metals may not be revealed on a first hair analysis. In fact, several months to possibly several years on a corrective nutritional program may be needed before they are revealed. This occurs because the toxic metals do not accumulate in the hair. Instead, they are stored in the brain, liver, kidneys and elsewhere. They will only be revealed on a hair analysis as they are being eliminated through the hair. A scientific nutrition program based on the hair mineral test, however, will promote the elimination of these and other toxic metals.

Nutrient Deficiencies

Mineral deficiencies commonly seen include calcium, magnesium and zinc. Hair mineral levels may be low, which is common with fast oxidizers. Fast oxidizers burn their food at a rapid rate and are particularly prone to hyperactive behavior if their diets are incorrect for their metabolic type. Very high levels of calcium and magnesium are also seen. These indicate the minerals are biologically unavailable. This can also contribute to symptoms of deficiency of these elements.

Chromium, manganese and zinc are required for sugar and carbohydrate tolerance. This is a factor in some cases of ADHD. There may also be deficiencies of many vitamins, especially if one is eating a refined food diet.

Chronic Infections

Chronic candida albicans infection is common in children with ADHD. Candida albicans is a natural inhabitant of the intestine. However, when it overgrows, it produces alcohol and acetaldehyde, both neurotoxins that can affect behavior, learning and many other aspects of physical and emotional health. Dietary sugars, antibiotic and steroid usage, copper imbalance and an alkaline body chemistry favor candida overgrowth. Symptoms may include gas and bloating, fungal rashes and mental foginess. Hair tests may also reveal mercury toxicity and slow oxidation.

Other chronic infections may also contribute to behavioral difficulties. A hair sodium/potassium ratio less than 2.5:1 often indicates chronic infection.

Allergies

Environmental and food allergies are very common. They can cause virtually any symptom, including emotional and behavioral problems. A hair analysis can provide indications of allergic symptoms when the sodium and potassium levels are low, or the sodium/potassium ratio is low.

The Indigo Children

There are many excellent books and materials about drug-free treatment of ADHD. An excellent web site is addgroup.org. A new book entitled [The Indigo Children](#) by Lee Carroll and Jan Tober asserts that many children born recently show unique characteristics that are often misdiagnosed

as ADHD. The book offers many suggestions for handling these children, including basic nutrition, body therapies, types of counselling and some excellent advice for parents.

In our experience, a healthful lifestyle, sound nutritional advice and other natural therapies can help many children and adults diagnosed with ADHD to function normally.