

The Wellness Family

Dr. Gerken Keeps You Informed

ADHD Contributors

ADHD used to be known as Attention Deficit Disorder, but in 1994 was renamed ADHD and broken down into three sub-types with their own pattern of behaviors: an inattentive type, a hyperactive-impulsive type and a combined type.

While every child diagnosed with ADHD will not act the same there seems to be a pattern of behavior that is being seen more frequently. In the 1990's there were about 900,000 children being treated for ADHD with Ritalin; today that number is over 5,000,000. It's time to ask what could possibly be causing such a dramatic rise in the number of diagnosed cases of ADHD.

Contributing Factors

No one has yet been able to determine the exact cause of ADHD, though there has been much speculation as to the contributing factors: premature delivery, low birth weight, birth injuries, excessive television watching, diet and nutrition, smoking during pregnancy, as well as genetic and environmental links.

Much of this has to be considered pure speculation; but recent studies are proving that one particular area is adding up to be more than just conjecture.

Diet and Nutrition

The truth is that in today's economy it's almost impossible for one parent to stay home and raise children while the other earns a living; and this has led to what many are calling a "toxic food environment".

Parents are busy, they work long, hard hours and when they get home the last thing they want to do is to prepare a meal for their family of four; so, out the door they go to buy fast food. Perhaps they'll find the energy to prepare a meal at home but it won't be from scratch. Today's idea of preparing a meal from scratch is to open a bag or box and put it in the microwave or on the stove to boil.

Fresh fruits, vegetables, poultry, fish, breads and grains are not a part of the standard diet any longer. Today's parents are just too busy, too distracted or just not aware of the dangers of this new "out of the box" diet; the greatest of which, is the excessive amounts of preservatives and artificial flavors and colors being consumed by their children.

The Trouble with Food Coloring

In a recent article published in *The Lancet* medical journal, researchers at Southampton University in England reportedly have found a link between food dyes and hyperactive behavior in children. Professor Jim Stevenson and his colleagues published their results based upon the examined effects of additives on 153 three-year-olds and 144 children aged 8 and 9.

The children were divided into three groups, two of which were given one of two drinks that contained a different combination of food colorings and sodium benzoate. The third group was given a placebo that contained no food coloring or preservatives.



“Artificial colors and preservatives in a child’s diet results in increased hyperactivity.”

This double-blinded, placebo-controlled study determined that artificial colors and the preservative sodium benzoate (or both) in a child's diet results in increased hyperactivity in the children tested.

In response, Susan Jebb, nutrition scientist at Britain's Medical Research Council added, "Such additives are most likely to be found in foods that we would like to see children eating less of – i.e. soft drinks, confectionery and so on – and so it reiterates the general healthy eating messages of encouraging healthier food choices."

Mother Nature's Cure

A study done at Harvard Medical School, in their neuropsychology post-graduate program, tested twenty children who had been diagnosed with ADHD. Ten were treated with Ritalin, the most commonly prescribed chemical by the medical profession; the other ten were treated with dietary supplements.

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The results were compared using the most popular neurological tests, including IVA/CPT and the WINKS analysis. The tests revealed that the subjects in both groups showed significant and essentially *identical* improvements [*emphasis added*].

These studies suggest that the majority of neurological symptoms ascribed to ADHD can be attributed to: food and additive allergies, heavy metal toxicity and other environmental toxins, low protein/high-carb diets, thyroid disorders, mineral imbalances, essential fatty acid, amino acid and B-Vitamin deficiencies.

The dietary supplements used were a mix of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, amino acids, essential fatty acids, phospholipids and probiotics that attempted to address the ADHD biochemical risk factors.

These findings support the effectiveness of food supplement treatment in improving attention and self-control in children with ADHD and suggest that food supplement treatment of ADHD may be equally effective to Ritalin treatment.

What Can I Do?

As a parent it's important to be aware of your options; ADHD is not a life sentence. With a few dietary changes and vitamin supplements you can help your child achieve their full potential.

Ask your Family Wellness Chiropractor to recommend a local health food store that will sell high-quality supplements, including omegas (fish oil). Typical over-the-counter children's chewable vitamins include sugar, artificial flavors and colors, as well as preservatives (all the things that you want to avoid). Find a reputable supplier that guarantees the purity of the vitamins and minerals included in their supplements.

Dear Parent,

Dr. Gerken is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. Take a moment today to ask your Family Wellness Chiropractor any questions you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

The Chiropractic Factor

In combination with diet, many parents report back a vast improvement in their child's ADHD symptoms in conjunction with regular Chiropractic care. Although there might not be a cure, improving your child's quality of life may be possible.

Dietary Recommendations

Chiropractors, pediatricians and many other healthcare professionals who agree that diet plays a vital role in your child's health, recommend the following:

- No soft drinks – these chemical concoctions contain artificial food coloring, additives and preservatives
- Limit dairy and bleached or processed flour – these items are taxing to your child's immunity
- Avoid fast food – the only healthy option is to avoid it all together, but if this isn't possible, then limit it to once a month
- Eat at least four servings of vegetables and one serving of fruit every day – fruit is an important part of your child's diet but fresh vegetables contain more of the vitamins and minerals that your child needs
- Eat whole grains and protein-rich foods – a diet that is high in protein and healthy carbohydrates will give your child the energy they need without over-working and over-loading their bodies
- Eat all-natural as much as possible – avoid foods that have been treated, processed, packaged, colored, flavored or pasteurized

Resources

www.thelancet.com – DOI:10.1016/SO140-6736(07)61306-3

Alternative Medicine Review 2003 (Aug); 8 (3): 319-330

www.food.gov.uk – Agency: Food Coloring May Stimulate Kids

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