

Lifestyle Approaches to Treatment of ADHD

Exercise: Research suggests that 45 minutes per day of strenuous exertion significantly reduces ADHD symptoms. Less may also be helpful, but this hasn't been evaluated.

Building self-discipline: Activities that involve repetitive practice (running, swimming, martial arts, dance, practicing a musical instrument, etc) build capacity for self-control and likely positively affect ADHD symptoms.

Providing needed structure in the absence of self-discipline: Children with ADHD have inherent deficits in the ability to structure themselves. Their impulsiveness causes them to live in the now and not consider the outcomes of their actions. They therefore may require substantially more structure, supervision, and direction than their same age (and same intelligence) peers). Supervising study time and closely monitoring activities such as Internet usage, video games, loosely supervised time with friends may be necessary. These children are at increased risk of school failure, substance use, unsafe sexual behavior, and illegal behavior

Restriction/limitation of electronic entertainment: Children who have ADHD and whose electronic entertainment (computer games and video games combined) is limited to one hour per day (for elementary age children) have been found to have less severe ADHD symptoms than those who spend more than one hour per day.

Diet: A balanced diet that has frequent lean protein and is high in complex carbohydrates may moderate ADHD symptoms through stabilizing blood sugar levels and providing brain nutrients at the optimal times.

Ensure a high intake of essential fatty acids. Americans typically take in sufficient Omega 6 fatty acids but children with ADHD may require more Omega 3 fatty acids than typical diet provides. Flaxseed, salmon, cod liver oil, walnuts, alfalfa sprouts, tuna, cauliflower, low fat mayonnaise, lettuce, and kidney beans are all good sources of Omega 3 acids. Fatty acid supplementation may also be helpful. Fish oil supplements are an easy way to increase fatty acid intake although fish burps often make such supplements difficult for children to tolerate.

Some vitamins have been found to potentially decrease ADHD symptoms. However, research findings are inconsistent. Some of the possibly beneficial vitamins include a number of B vitamins and the nutrients zinc and zinc sulphate. Providing your child with a children's multivitamin, preferably with Omega 3 fatty acids, is an easy way to ensure that vitamin needs are met.

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