

Nutrition and ADHD

Having a healthy, balanced diet is important to having a happy and healthy life. A healthy diet can provide an effective complementary approach to alleviating some symptoms of ADHD.

However, taking an honest look at your nutrition habits and figuring out what works best for you or your child can be a confusing process. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), eating properly can help lower the risk for many chronic diseases, including heart disease. In addition, exercise and physical activity are recommended as part of an overall healthy lifestyle.

Dietary approaches for ADHD *eliminate* -- or take out -- one or more foods in the person's diet (for example, sugar, candy and food with red dye). The assumption is that being sensitive to certain foods may cause or worsen symptoms of ADHD. Careful research, however, has not supported this approach as a form of treatment.

Nutritional supplements and large doses of vitamins can *add* things that some believe are missing in a diet. Some people think dietary supplements improve symptoms of ADHD. Scientists have found no proof of this idea.

Dietary guidelines from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) can be found here (<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>).

Meal Planning

When it comes to ADHD, what you eat matters! Meal planning and cooking are great healthy eating strategies, but can be a challenge for people affected by ADHD. Preparation, time management, decision-making, and following multiple steps are all skills involved in creating any meal. Frustrated, many people with ADHD decide to eat out or order in rather than cook for themselves. Unfortunately, takeout and restaurant meals often lack important nutrients that your body needs.

When you cook at home, you know exactly what you're putting into your dish. You can use fresh and healthy ingredients that are low in fat, sugar, and salt without artificial ingredients and additives that can make ADHD symptoms worse for some people. Eating healthy foods can make ADHD symptoms easier to manage.

Find more meal planning strategies and recipes in our *Cookbook for Busy Minds: Simple, Easy & Healthy Meals to Feed Your Brain*

(https://chadd.org/portals/0/Content/CHADD/Documents/NRC/Cookbook_for_Busy_Minds.pdf)



Nutrition and ADHD Videos

ADHD and the accompanying executive function deficits can affect people in many ways, including having an impact on your weight. We sat down with Roberto Olivardia, PhD, to discuss what you can do to eat more healthfully. This video, *ADHD and Eating* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36KQrfRSLzY&feature=youtu.be>), discusses what people with ADHD can do to improve their eating habits.

From dietary supplements, food additives, and artificial dyes to caffeine and food sensitivities there are a lot of options to consider. In this Ask the Expert webinar, *5 Ways Nutrition can Impact ADHD Symptoms* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFvYOzUuhDQ&t=1845s>), featuring Laura Stevens, MS, you will learn about five adjustments to your diet that may affect ADHD symptoms. Create a plan for where to start when making changes and how to track if they are working. Leave with new information and a plan for using nutrition as a complementary treatment to help improve your quality of life with ADHD.

Related ADHD Weekly Articles:

Pay Attention Longer with Breakfast (<https://chadd.org/adhd-weekly/pay-attention-longer-with-breakfast/>)

Make the Most of Grocery Shopping (<https://chadd.org/adhd-weekly/ask-the-specialist-make-the-most-of-grocery-shopping/>)

Do Artificial Food Colors Cause ADHD Symptoms? (<https://chadd.org/adhd-weekly/do-artificial-food-colors-cause-adhd-symptoms/>)

Q&A: What about Caffeine for ADHD? (<https://chadd.org/adhd-weekly/qa-what-about-caffeine-for-adhd/>)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/index.html>) (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC or the Department of Health and Human Services (<https://www.hhs.gov/>) (HHS).

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