

ADHD Parenting

HEALTH, FOOD & NUTRITION

Recipes for Better Focus and Self-Control

Studies suggest that dietary changes may improve symptoms of hyperactivity, inattention, and impulsivity in children with ADHD. Use these recipes to cook up meals that deliver the protein, complex carbohydrates, and whole grains that your child needs.

| By [ADDitude Editors](#) | ✓ [Verified](#) | Updated on April 15, 2022

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The ADHD Food Fix

Studies show that [dietary changes](#) have not only improved symptoms of hyperactivity, concentration, and impulsivity, but also have calmed oppositional behavior in kids with ADHD. Parents, not sure how to maximize ADHD-friendly foods while steering clear of those that may exacerbate symptoms? Read on to find out how to adjust your family's diet — from breakfast to dinner to dessert — with these [ADHD-friendly recipes](#).

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The Best Breakfast for Kids with ADHD

A [breakfast rich in protein](#) jump-starts better learning and behavior, say experts. Why? Protein is used by the brain to make neurotransmitters — chemicals that help brain cells talk with each other. For your morning menu, try scrambled eggs with whole-grain toast; or natural peanut butter on whole-grain bread. Make sure to skip sugary cereals, which can cause spikes in blood sugar and increase hyperactivity in kids with [ADHD](#).

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Another Breakfast Boost

Combining protein with complex carbs that are high in fiber and low in sugar will help your child manage ADHD symptoms better during the day. The sugars from the carbohydrates are digested more slowly because eating protein and fat along with fiber results in a more gradual and sustained blood sugar release. Try these [ADHD-approved breakfast](#) combos: a veggie omelet and a bran muffin; yogurt with fruit and oatmeal; toast with peanut butter.

[Free Guide: 9 Foods to Eat (and Avoid) for Improved ADHD Symptoms]

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Smart Snacks for the ADHD Brain

Since ADHD medications tend to blunt the appetite, it's important to make every calorie count. You'll also want to load up on protein (to sustain alertness) and complex carbohydrates (to avoid blood sugar spikes and crashes). Quick, calorie-filled snacks combos for kids with ADHD include: creamy or cheesy soups with croutons; string cheese, crackers, and an apple; a banana and peanut butter.

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Balanced Lunch and Dinner for Better Behavior

When preparing an ADHD-friendly meal, half of the plate should be filled with fruits and veggies, one-fourth with protein, and one-fourth with complex carbs. This combination of food may control swings in behavior caused by hunger, surges in blood sugar, or a shortfall of a particular nutrient. In addition, whole grains help prevent blood sugar levels from spiking and then plummeting, which can increase inattention.

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ADHD-Friendly Lunch and Dinner Options

While following proper plate division, try to serve as many of these ADHD-approved foods as you can at each meal: a dark green and a yellow or red vegetable; whole grains; low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese; lean meat, fish, eggs, beans, or nuts (for protein); foods rich in omega-3s, like canola oil, walnuts, and cold-water fish, like fresh salmon.

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Healthy Desserts for Kids with ADHD

If your child pushes away the main course or has appetite loss due to ADHD medication, use dessert to get some extra calories and nutrition into her diet — but opt for less sugary treats. Here are healthy dessert options: homemade applesauce; yogurt parfait — alternate layers of yogurt and fruit; or chocolate pudding made with skim milk.

[9 Nutrition Tricks for Picky Eaters]

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What to Leave Off the Menu

Several studies suggest that [artificial additives](#) and sugar may increase hyperactivity in children with ADHD. Fresh, unprocessed foods are best for people with ADHD, as they contain few additives. To be safe, check labels and cut back on foods containing artificial colors, flavors, dyes, preservatives, and excess sugar.



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