

## Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD/ADHD)

As any parent of a child diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can tell you, coping with the daily frustrations is a challenge at best. ADHD is one of the most frequently diagnosed childhood psychiatric condition.(1 &#fn103866>) While there are many theories regarding the cause of ADHD, we now know that many of the children diagnosed today, have a biological parent who shares the same diagnosis. Other factors that may contribute to the symptoms of ADHD are fetal alcohol syndrome, lead poisoning, meningitis, and a genetic resistance to thyroid hormone.(2 &#fn103867>, 3 &#fn103868>) Also, while not a primary cause, there seems to be a positive association that exists between negative family environment factors and ADHD.(2 &#fn103867>, 4 &#fn103869>)

We are fortunate that the diagnosis of ADHD has come as far as it has. Before 1980, a child with a short attention span who seemed impulsive and hyperactive was diagnosed with Minimal Brain Dysfunction. However, experts in the field argued that this was not an accurate diagnosis because there was no common neurologic problem that was consistent among the children diagnosed. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association made a decision to look more at the behavioral side of the diagnosis, calling it ADD, or Attention Deficit Disorder. We now know that hyperactivity is almost always present so the name has been changed to ADHD.

\*What causes ADHD?\*

The /Lancet/ published a study in 1985, which reported that 79 percent of hyperactive children improved when suspect foods were eliminated from their diets, only to become worse again when the foods were reintroduced. Artificial colorings and flavorings were the most serious culprits; sugar was also found to have a noticeable effect. The New York public school system initiated an experimental design in which sugar, food additives, and preservatives were gradually eliminated from the school cafeterias. During the four-year period of dietary modifications, the mean academic performance percentile rating increased from 39.2 percent to 54.9 percent.(5 &#fn103959>) Additives include artificial flavors and colors, preservatives including BHA and BHT, and sugars that can be identified in the forms of sucrose, fructose, corn syrup, mannitol, sorbitol, and other sweeteners.

Mineral status among those with ADHD has been the subject of several published clinical trials. Magnesium deficiency is the most common of the mineral deficiencies associated with ADHD. (6 &#fn107446>) In one study, magnesium deficiency was identified in 95 percent of the ADHD children examined.(7 &#fn103893>) ADHD may be influenced by \*dysbiosis\*. The presence of dysbiotic flora is encouraged by the use of antibiotics, which can destroy "friendly" or probiotic flora normally inhabiting the intestinal mucosa. The average child undergoes multiple courses of antibiotic treatment in the first five years of life, typically without replacement of probiotics. The resulting overgrowth of yeast and other pathogenic flora has been linked to alterations of immune function, food sensitivities, and ADHD. A study reported that high levels of antimetabolites, consistent with fungal or /Candida/ related complex, were identified in the urine of children with ADHD.(8 &#fn103881>)

A deficiency in \*essential fatty acids (EFAs)\* is being singled out by some as a cause of ADHD. EFAs influence ADHD primarily in two ways: they influence gut permeability and are needed for the proper development of brain tissue.(9 &#fn112109>)

## About the Author

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