

NON-DRUG INTERVENTIONS

Children who exhibit behavior that has been diagnosed as ADD/ADHD usually have very sensitive nervous systems. That means that their environment and relationships play an even more important role in their development than is true for other children. The external factors that parents have control over, including food, exercise, and entertainment choices, will go a long way to supporting a gentler experience for families who include these children. In addition, there are ways to help a child with their homework and educational experience so that it boosts learning and self esteem.

Food sensitivities

While research conclusions in the area of food sensitivities are inconsistent, many parents have found that certain foods intensify their child's hyperactivity. If you notice for example that your child has swollen, red eyes, stomach or headaches during periods of super hyperactivity, or just following a meal, they may be allergic to certain foods.

The most common allergens for these children include:

- Milk and milk products
- Wheat
- Refined sugar
- Processed foods – especially those with preservatives (including monosodium glutamate) and artificial coloring and flavors
- Chocolate and cola
- Corn

Substitutes include:

- Soy, (though some children who are sensitive to milk are also sensitive to soy), rice, goat milk
- Oat, rye, rice bread
- Honey or molasses, which are natural sugars
- Carob instead of chocolate

Staying with organic fruits, vegetables, grains, and lean meats are most helpful for all children, but especially sensitive children. Simple things can help, like putting out a tray of vegetables and dip on the table for after school snacks. Healthier alternatives to snacks and even dessert options are available through health food markets and even health-oriented restaurants. (like the Whole Foods, Wild Oats, Chicago Diner, Karyns, etc.). You may want to get your child tested for food allergies, though you may experience some false positives and negatives.

Exercise

Exercise not only offers an outlet for the excess energy that many of these children exhibit, but exercise oxygenates the brain which is essential to the child's development.

As much as possible, encourage a child's natural athletic gifts and preferences.

If your child is overwhelmed by organized sports, then encourage unstructured play.

Martial arts and yoga exercises are also recommended from as early an age as possible. They can help children focus better and improve concentration. These exercises also help improve balance and alignment between the speed of their bodies and minds.

If children can learn to close their eyes and focus on their favorite place or a favorite work even two

minutes to five minutes three times a week, research has shown that can improve on selective attention.

Learning Differences

Each child learns differently. If parents can continually notice and ask themselves, “What is my child good at? What is my child drawn to?” then they have a clue about how to help them with their homework. For example, if a child is more relationship-oriented than numbers oriented, then make the numbers into children or teddy bears and talk about math in those terms. It requires parents to apply their own imagination in interpreting homework in a way that most interests their child. There are even simple tools to help children feel more in control, like drawing a spiral and having the children trace the spiral with their fingers when they begin to feel overwhelmed.

Entertainment choices

Studies are now showing that the less television the better, especially for those under two years of age. Since, as was mentioned, these children have more sensitive nervous systems, violence and wildly fast video games may negatively impact them and make it even harder for them to focus. Entertainment that includes exercise and creative play are best. The more peaceful their surroundings, the better able they are to cope with the noise and over-stimulation already going on inside them.

