

Pay Attention!

ADHD sufferers find surprising help from unlikely sources | by Jennifer LeClaire



Cindy Heroux's daughters were always high-energy, so Heroux, a registered dietitian in Oviedo, Florida, initially wasn't too concerned when her youngest daughter began to act more hyper than usual. But by age 9, her daughter was constantly jumping and moving around, performing poorly in school, sleeping badly and losing control over her volume.

"Her grades were slipping, and she was becoming socially ostracized," Heroux says.

When her daughter was diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyper-

activity disorder (ADHD) and Tourette Syndrome, the doctor was prepared to prescribe Haldol, a potent antipsychotic drug. Heroux balked. She didn't want her child to be on such a powerful drug for the rest of her life if there was any chance other treatments could help.

Because she'd had success treating other children through diet modification, Heroux decided to put her daughter on an elimination diet. "We brought her down to just a handful of whole foods: a couple of proteins, grains, fruits and vegeta-

bles. She had no candy and nothing with a lot of ingredients in it."

Changing her daughter's diet so drastically wasn't easy. It was challenging to find appropriate wholesome foods without suspicious ingredients or preservatives. But a few weeks after implementing the diet, Heroux was thrilled. "The difference in her behavior was unbelievable," she says.

Treatment Choices

Although more than 6 million children in the United States take prescription drugs to treat ADHD, increasing numbers of parents are seeking natural therapies such as diet modification and homeopathy to deal with the manifestations of excessive inattentiveness, hyperactivity, forgetfulness and distractibility.

Mainstream doctors believe that ADHD is caused by a deficiency of norepinephrine, a chemical messenger the brain needs to inhibit muscle activity and impulsive behavior. Conventional treatments include stimulants such as Ritalin. Other physicians prescribe antidepressants or anti-anxiety or antipsychotic medications. But these medications can have unpleasant and sometimes severe side effects, including nausea or vomiting, decreased appetite, weight loss or social withdrawal.

Alternative health care practitioners are investigating other possible causes of ADHD—for example, food allergies and poor nutrition. And some nutritionists, homeopaths and chiropractors are successfully

Get on the fast track to heart health

It's easy to include NutriSoy® soy protein in your meal plan. Take your health to heart by including these delicious products in your diet.

Breakfast



One bar = 20 grams of soy protein
719-578-5000
www.peakbar.com

Lunch



One serving = 10 grams of soy protein
877-966-8769
www.bocafoods.com

Dinner



One serving = 11 grams of soy protein
800-510-2178
www.soy7.com

Snack



One serving = 7 grams of soy protein
800-700-8986
www.drsoy.com

NutriSoy
100% Natural Soy Protein

866-726-7912

© 2004 Archer Daniels Midland Company

wellness

using alternative remedies to help treat ADHD.

The Diet Connection

After initially eliminating all potential problem foods from her daughter's diet, Heroux gradually added foods one at a time back into the young girl's diet. With every food her daughter ate, she looked for a reaction. "I suspected artificial food coloring right away," Heroux said. "Within 15 to 20 minutes of eating a food containing artificial coloring, her ADHD symptoms came back."

According to the International Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Immunology at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, DC, children with ADHD are seven times more likely to have food allergies than other children, leading researchers to believe that food allergies may contribute to ADHD symptoms for reasons that are not yet completely understood.

Some alternative health care practitioners recommend the Feingold

Program to manage ADHD. This program recommends eliminating foods with additives and preservatives. Advocates of the diet believe that some children are sensitive to salicylates (aspirin-like chemicals found in many fruits and vegetables), which Feingold supporters believe cause hyperactivity.

In 1996, Purdue University reported that boys with low blood levels of omega-3 fats (the beneficial fatty acids found in fish and flax) have a greater frequency of ADHD.

"Vegetarians aren't candidates for fish," says Matthew Baral, a naturopath and assistant professor at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine and Health Sciences in Tempe, Arizona. "But flax oil, evening primrose oil and borage oil can be used instead." Deficiencies of fatty acids and vitamins and minerals, including B₁₂, B₆, zinc, magnesium, calcium and iron, may play a significant role in ADHD, says Baral.

Opinions differ on whether dietary changes are the best route to

Too Much TV?

There may be a new reason to limit your child's TV viewing. In a study published in the April 2004 issue of *Pediatrics*, researchers concluded that early television exposure among children aged 1-3 may be linked to attention-deficit problems in later years. The study found that for every hour of television watched daily, children aged 1-3 had a 10 percent increased risk of developing attention disorders by age 7. Parents of 2,623 children answered questions about their kids' television viewing and listed the attention behaviors they noticed in their children at age 7, which included acting restless, obsessive or impulsive; having difficulty concentrating; and being easily confused. The researchers theorized that watching television alters the development of a child's brain, which undergoes rapid growth in early years. Although the study suggests that overstimulation during these years can have a negative effect on the brain's development, it does not prove such a link. More research is needed, the authors said, because parts of the connection are unclear, such as whether educational programming or supervised viewing may limit adverse effects on young children.

—Kali Foxman