

ADHD: A Comprehensive Approach

By Dr. Karen Prentice

The following suggestions are research based and come from multiple sources and studies. This advice is intended to complement and not replace any current treatment your child or teen is already receiving.

1. Make sure your child has a 504 plan
2. Learning happens all year long. If your child does well on medications during the school year, do not stop in the summer. Keep the medications going and encourage reading every day, fun math games, puzzles, board games and “field trips” to the library, science museum, etc.
3. Limit your child or teens media time to 1-2 hours max per day. This includes all TV, video games, iPads, and computer games. Electronics are directly associated with behavior issues and inattention. Ask us for a list of media free entertainment ideas.
4. To the best of your ability, stop all processed foods, nitrates, preservatives, and artificial sweeteners. If a “food item” has more than 3-4 ingredients and you don’t know what those ingredients are, it is probably processed. This includes goldfish, sugar cereals, Pop tarts and fruit snacks.
5. Reduce the sugar. Natural sugars found in fruit are ok.
6. Stop all food dye, especially avoid yellow dye # 5 and red dye # 40.
7. No soda
8. Eat organic fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Studies show pesticide levels 40% higher in kids who eat conventional produce compared to kids who eat organic produce.
9. Improve your child or teen’s nutrition. We all need 2-3 fresh fruits per day, 3-4 vegetables per day, 3-4 servings of yogurt, cheese or milk, 5 whole grains-meaning brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat bread, and 3 servings of protein per day such as fish, chicken or beans. Serving size depends on the age, sex, growth phase your child is in and the amount of exercise per day.
10. Exercise an hour every day. Try to find something that your child enjoys, it doesn’t matter what it is, just get them moving! For a list of activities see our Get Fit Handout. Research has shown that yoga and karate are extremely helpful for children and adults who have ADD or ADHD.
11. Spend some time outside everyday enjoying nature. In the summer, you may have to get up at 5am or go out after 7pm but do something and get some fresh air and nature time. Check out the book, *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv for more information about the benefits of spending time in nature.
12. Start your child on a multivitamin daily and an omega 3 fatty acid with EPA and DHA. For kids under 80 pounds give 1000 total DHA and EPA per day and for kids over 80 pounds 2000 total per day.
13. If your child is deficient in iron or has a low serum ferritin, talk to your doctor about iron replacement. If your child or teen is deficient in vitamin D, talk to your doctor about vitamin D 3 supplements.
14. Some other resources include: www.chadd.org, www.additudemag.com, and the books, *ADHD without Drugs: A Parents Guide to the Integrative Treatment of ADHD* by Sandford Newmark , MD and *Seven Steps to Homework Success* by Goldstein and Zentall, Ph.D.s