

# **ADHD Nutrition: Balanced Meals, Better Behaviour**

Strike the perfect balance between fruits and vegetables, protein, and complex carbs to ease some ADHD symptoms.

## **ADHD Supplements: Facts About Fish Oil**

**Can this common supplement sharpen your child's focus?**

Found mainly in cold-water, fatty fish, such as sardines, tuna and salmon, omega-3 fatty acids are believed to be important in brain and nerve cell function. The body cannot make omega-3 fatty acids by itself, and most people don't consume enough of them in food to derive benefits, which is why fish-oil supplements are so popular today.

While omega-3 fatty acids seem to improve anyone's mental focus, several small recent studies suggest that the compounds may be especially helpful to those with ADHD.

It is usually recommended that sufferers of ADHD take an omega-3 supplement as it seems to help most with mental focus, not hyperactivity or impulsivity. It may take up to six weeks to begin seeing benefits, though.

## **Picking the Right Pill**

There are two main types of omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

The most popular omega-3 supplements differ in the amounts of EPA and DHA they contain. Based on the most recent research, it is recommended that you choose a supplement that has at least three times the amount of EPA to DHA. The data seems to show that those using supplements containing higher ratios of EPA get a better response in ADHD symptoms, including mood swings and aggression.

Children may take up to 2.5 grams of fish oil each day; adults may take up to 5 grams.

Be aware that high doses of omega-3s may cause nausea, diarrhoea, and other gastrointestinal discomfort.

**Consult your doctor before adding this supplement to your routine.**

**The two most important things that you can do  
for your health:**

**Exercise and take omega-3s.**

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Choosing the right foods — or cutting back on the wrong ones — may be a proactive way to prevent ADHD symptoms from swinging out of control.

It is advisable for all sufferers and parents of those with ADHD to think about their plates when preparing a meal. Half of the plate, should be filled with fruits and vegetables, one-fourth with carbohydrates and one-fourth with a protein. This combination is a balanced diet, and it may control swings in behaviour caused by hunger, surges in blood sugar, or a shortfall of a particular nutrient.

## **Protein**

Protein is particularly important, in part because it prevents surges in blood sugar that may increase hyperactivity. The brain makes a variety of chemical messengers, or neurotransmitters, to regulate wakefulness and sleep. Certain neurotransmitters, including dopamine and norepinephrine, boost alertness. Others, including serotonin, cause drowsiness.

Studies have shown that dietary protein triggers the synthesis of alertness-inducing neurotransmitters, while dietary carbohydrates trigger the synthesis of neurotransmitters that cause drowsiness.

These findings lend credence to the popular belief that people with ADD fare better on a protein-rich breakfast and lunch. However, it is also advocated to eating several servings of whole grains each day to prevent blood sugar levels from spiking and then plummeting, and cutting back on foods that contain dyes and excess sugar.

## **How Diet and Meds May Interact**

Eating a high-fat breakfast can cause the body to absorb a stimulant medication more slowly, and so delay the drug's effectiveness. Feed your child a low-fat morning meal to maximise the benefits of meds.

Appetite suppression is one of the most common side effects of ADHD medications. For many parents, the solution is simply to keep mealtimes flexible, and to serve their child a large meal that's high in calories and nutrients late in the evening, after the medication has worn off for the day.

All information provided here is for information purposes only, please consult your health professional before making any changes to your diet that may affect your health.