

ADD / ADHD

"Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ADD/ADHD

Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are the most commonly diagnosed psychiatric condition in children and adolescents in the United States, affecting roughly 5% of school age children. More than 8 million American school children are taking the prescription drug Ritalin, a Class II narcotic (as high as 50% of children in some school districts), doubling prescriptions of the drug since 1990. JAMA reported that from 1991 to 1995 prescriptions for children ages 2 to 4 jumped 3 times. It is now estimated that 1 in 7 school age children is being given the drug daily.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual describes three variations of ADHD: 1)primary symptom is difficulty in concentrating; 2)primary symptoms are hyperactivity and impulsiveness; and 3)combination of both (difficulty in concentrating as well as restlessness and inability to sit still or to control muscle impulses). Diagnosis is made by interviewing parents and teachers and on observed behavior. Symptoms include a restless inability to sit still and read, study or even watch television.

ADD/ADHD isn't really a deficiency in one's attention at all. It truly is an abundance of attention that is being sent in too many directions. What is interesting is that at times these same people can actually focus on tasks at unbelievable levels. Most of these sufferers have above average intelligence and many are considered "gifted".

The real challenge is helping these children (and adults) without harming them or taking away their personalities. The death of Matthew Smith of Oakland County, Michigan, who collapsed in cardiac arrest while skateboarding, brought a nervous second look at the long-term effects of Ritalin use. According to Dr. Ljubisa Dragovic, chief pathologist at the Oakland County medical examiners office, "There was a chronic change of the heart

muscle and small blood vessels in the heart. This comes from long term exposure. This kid was on Ritalin for over 10 years." He also stated that the drug affected pathways throughout the nervous system over time, causing "gradual, low-level" damage.

In a nutshell, I think the problem of ADD/ADHD is one of several imbalances. Let's explore them briefly.

1. An electrical problem caused by lowered electrolyte (mineral) levels. Like the battery in your car, your body has an electrical charge that flows through pathways known as meridians and helps the organs operate on an energy level. If electrolyte levels get too low then under stressful conditions (physical, emotional, mental, etc.) the body actually reverses its flow direction and things start to work in the "opposite of normal" orientation. This explains partly why a stimulant like Ritalin or caffeine often helps to some degree, albeit temporarily. I've also seen that sedatives (herbal or medicinal) make the problem worse in many cases.
2. This energy situation is partly brought on by poor digestion and assimilation. Most of these people have genetic pre-dispositions for digestive weaknesses and don't know how to correct this. We also know that these people are low in Essential Fatty Acids.
3. The third part of the problem is that this energy imbalance affects the adrenal glands and seems to cause an imbalance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. These two systems should work together in harmony but occasionally one gets out of balance and causes excessive stimulation or even sedation.
4. Another problem is in the Corpus Callosum, a part of the brain mechanism that works with equalizing energy to the brain quadrants. Often there is more energy going to one part of the brain than another.
5. Tissue toxicity levels also play a part in this. Often we find that metabolic wastes are not being eliminated from the tissues sufficiently.

As these accumulate they cause a change in the efficiency of the cells to function properly just like having a partially plugged exhaust system on your car effects your cars performance. Soft drinks, food colors, preservatives and several other foods are often factors.

Let's take a closer look at the nutrition part of this for a minute. Before the food even gets to the mouth there's often problems in the actual nutrition levels of that food. A 1992 study by the Earth Summit Report indicated that North American farm and range soils have become 85% depleted of minerals over the past 100 years.

A year later the World Health organization reported that US soils are 95% depleted of minerals. Since plants grown in these soils do not have the minerals available to them it seems clear that we cannot get those "missing" minerals when we eat the plants as part of our meal. Actually, it was reported to the US Senate back in 1936 (Document 264, 74th Congress) that,

"99% of the American people are deficient in minerals and a marked deficiency in one of the more important minerals actually results in disease."

More recently, Dr. Linus Pauling (noted winner of 2 Nobel Prizes) said,

"You can trace every sickness, every disease and every ailment to a mineral deficiency."

A second problem is that some of us do not digest as well as others. It's been my experience that the large majority of those experiencing these types of symptoms (ADD/ADHD) do not digest their foods as well as their peers. This means that we could have 10 children eating the identical "perfect" foods and a few of them will likely get only a small percentage of the actual available nutrition in those foods because of digestive weakness.

Keep in mind that the body must have a sufficient quantity of these essential nutrients (vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, essential fatty acids) to function properly. Try running your car on a mixture of 70 percent gasoline and 30 percent

water and you'll soon understand what I mean by this. (Don't really do this, I think you get the point.)

A third part of this nutrition problem is that many of us do not eat the right foods anyway. Look at the diet of your family, particularly those with suspected attention "challenges", and make a list of what they are eating.

Even if the fruits and vegetables were loaded with the needed essential nutrients they probably aren't eating them any way. Many of these people tend to eat on the run and don't take time to chew thoroughly or eat foods that provide their cells with the needed nutrients.

Let me share with you some research I've found particularly interesting, especially since it happened over 20 years ago and still seems to have little if any effect on society.

About 20 years ago Dr. Stephen Schoenthaler, a professor of criminology at the University of California, came across an off the wall theory that intrigued him. This theory stated that the reason for the phenomenal increase in youth crime in America was not genetics, Dr. Spock, feminism, or the atomic bomb but sugar.

Because modern processed, refined foods are so high in sugar, it was argued that juvenile offenders were suffering from reactive hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels) caused by a rebound effect from the excessive sugar in the blood stream.

It was an interesting idea so Dr. Schoenthaler set about testing this theory in California juvenile correction centers. He removed the soft drink and sweets vending machines and the prison canteens offered only meals from fresh meats, fruits and vegetables rather than from processed foods. The effects were dramatic. Within 3 months a major improvement in the children's behavior was accompanied by a staggering 40% drop in serious breaches of discipline.

But was it really the sugar? If it was, Schoenthaler argued, he would expect to see a rapid improvement in behavior because reactive hypoglycemia is a short-lived phenomenon. Reports showed that the behavior did not change quickly, rather it gradually improved over a period of several

weeks. So he reasoned that something else was responsible for these behavioral improvements. He guessed that it was the increased in vitamin and mineral as a result of the fresh foods they were being fed.

Dr. Schoenthaler began a new set of double-blind experiments using vitamin and mineral supplements for ½ of the prisoners and a placebo for the other ½.

He found that there was a 38% reduction in breaches of discipline in the prisoners given vitamin and mineral supplements with a marked decrease in violent offenses. There was no change at all in the placebo group!

Another study reported in the Lancet in 1985 found that 82% of overactive children improved dramatically by eliminating food sensitivities and food additives. In fact 35% were able to act entirely normal again. The most common offenders were invariably artificial colors and preservatives.

20 years ago another research team, Sally Bunday and her mother Irene Colquhoun, founded the Hyperactive Children's Support Group in the UK. They found that a large majority of these hyperactive children had asthma, eczema and other allergic conditions, and zinc deficiency.

Clinical signs such as excessive thirst, frequent urination, dry skin and hair were also observed. This led them to their belief that a deficiency of Essential Fatty Acids is also a problem.

More research is coming in every day verifying this observation. In fact, two EFA's, arachidonic acid (AA) and docosahexanoic acid (DHA)- play a major role in the brain and eyes, constituting 20 percent of the dry weight of the brain and over 30 percent of the retina.

Two others-eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and dihomo-gamma linolenic acid (DGLA)- are crucial for normal brain development. These EFA's are found in foods containing Omega 6 series and Omega 3 series of Essential Fatty Acids.

Now let's look at what this nutritional deficiency does to the body in other ways. First, let's con-

sider the low mineral levels that we discussed earlier. Again, let's use the analogy of a car battery. The solution in a car battery is water with special electrical conducting properties caused by minerals or electrolytes.

Keep in mind that electrolytes are simply minerals that conduct energy. As the battery in your car ages the electrolyte solution becomes weaker. Eventually, when under stress, (like a minus 40 January day) the battery will fail and the car will not start.

If you put a battery charger on this battery it just won't hold a significant charge for very long so you must replace that battery with one that has sufficient carrying capacity to start your car and operate it's electrical needs.

Unlike your car battery, you cannot just throw your body away when it fails and get a new one. Therefore, we need to understand how to "re-energize" the one we have. As the electrolyte solution in the cells of our body decreases the ability to carry on their energy tasks also decreases, leaving us vulnerable under stress.

Stress can even throw the energy system into a "reversed" pattern, causing the flow of energy to run opposite to normal. Imagine if you will, a clock plugged into your body's energy system. Normally the hands will move clockwise, but when the electrolytes cannot handle the stress load you are under the system goes into a counterclockwise motion on your clock.

This is important because it causes an "opposite" reaction to what one would expect. Sedatives now act like stimulants and stimulants like sedatives.

I can't tell you how many times the mother of an ADD/ADHD child tells me she gives the child coffee or other stimulants to "slow them down", or how many of them are drinking a can of Mountain Dew which is high in caffeine just before going to bed.

I know that if I drink a can of Mountain Dew before going to bed I just as well not go to bed because the stimulation keeps me awake. Not so with our

"reversed" energy people as they don't react the same to the stimulants.

So, what are these stresses that cause many with low electrolytes to reverse? They can be any kind of physical, mental or emotional stress. Sometimes changing schools or making new friends, the loss of a loved one, a surgery, vaccinations, tests, athletic competitions or tryouts, spelling bees, family problems, or anything that produces extra stress can be the straw that breaks the camels back when it comes to the body's energy system. Once this happens it's often difficult for it to correct itself because of the low electrolyte levels.

To understand how the nervous system is effected one must understand how it works. The nervous system is the body's information-gathering, storage and control system. The overall function of the nervous system is to gather information about the external environment and the body's internal state, to analyze this information, and to initiate appropriate responses.

The nervous system is organized like a computer system that controls a highly complex machine. The CPU for the system is the Central Nervous System (CNS) which is comprised of the brain and spinal cord. Input of information to the CNS comes from the sense organs while output is carried by the nerves to all areas of the body.

There are two important divisions of the CNS, the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and the somatic nervous system (SNS). The ANS is responsible for the involuntary, seemingly automatic (unconscious) regulation of internal body functions while the SNS controls voluntary movement. It is the ANS that I want to go into in more depth at this time.

The ANS is made up of two parts, the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. In general, the sympathetic nervous system heightens activity in the body while the parasympathetic nervous system has the opposite effect. The two systems act in conjunction and normally balance each other. However, during exercise or times of fear or stress, the activity of the sympathetic system predominates, while during sleep the parasympathetic system exerts more

control.

The sympathetic nervous system releases the neurotransmitter chemicals epinephrine (also called adrenaline) and nor-epinephrine which also stimulates the release of epinephrine from the adrenal glands into the blood stream. This speeds up the heart beat, widens airways, dilates blood vessels in muscles and constricts those in the skin and abdominal organs, decreasing the activity levels of the digestive system and dilating the pupil of the eyes.

Many individuals with ADD or ADHD symptoms appear to have an imbalance between their sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. This can cause them to become very hypersensitive to sensory input (sights, smells, sounds, etc.) and overloads their central nervous system. This causes them to be in a constant state of "alert" which would be like constantly expecting a "whack" on the hand for no reason at all from an invisible person and never knowing when it was coming. Talk about a case of nerves!

Another key area to review is the Corpus Callosum. The Corpus Callosum is a bundle of nerves connecting the left and right sides of the cerebrum (largest part of the brain and site of most of the intelligent activities). This connecting mechanism is often out of balance with these folks and will effect them as if they have reversed energy flow (even if they don't have reversed energy flow).

WARNING: The Information in these articles is not intended to replace medical advice or treatment. Questions about symptoms, specific dietary needs and medications, general or specific, should be discussed with your physician. The information in this article is for informational purposes only, and is not medical advice or a substitute for a physician's consultation and/or examination.

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