

## **Non-Medication Ways to Treat Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

1. **Protein:** Kids that consume more protein have been shown to have improvement in symptoms. The sources of protein should vary widely, for example through legumes, yogurt, protein shakes, eggs, fish, white meat chicken, pork and a moderate amount of lean red meat.
2. **Omega 3 Fatty Acids:** There have been a few studies that link ADHD symptoms to low levels of essential fatty acids and to low ratio of Omega 3 to Omega 6 fatty acids. Omega 3 fatty acids can be consumed naturally through walnuts, spinach other leafy greens, fish and flax seed or taken as a supplement.
3. **Diet restriction:** The famous one is the Feingold diet, which mostly cuts out artificial colors and flavors, also any food with natural “salicylates” The list of these is long, including lots of fruits. Salicylates are also in anti-inflammatory medications such as Aspirin. The actual response rates to this diet are low.
4. **Sugar:** Cutting back on sugar has never been shown to effectively treat ADHD, experts still think it makes sense to minimize sugar intake and artificial colors as both have been shown to increase hyperactive behavior. It is also recommended to minimize or avoid caffeinated beverages.
5. **Keep a regular schedule,** especially consistent sleep and wake times. Focusing on bio-rhythms in this way is beneficial. Establish daily routines. Written schedules are often helpful to include homework and meal times, chores, practice time, free time, bed time.
6. **Cue transitions** from one activity or event to another as children with AD/HD tend to struggle with transitions.
7. **Good sleep is very important.** Practicing good sleep habits can greatly enhance anybody’s sleep, especially a child’s. (See the sleep tips page under “resources” on [denverpsychiatry.com](http://denverpsychiatry.com)).
8. **Close work with schools is important.** Parents should always ask the school for support and work with the child and school for the best support plan. Good communication is always important.
9. **Parents should remember that AD/HD is a legitimate medical condition** and a child should have support as should the parents; gains will be gradual rather than rapid in most cases.
10. **Positive discipline strategies** as opposed to rejecting or punitive discipline strategies tend to work best; in other words, focus on positive, have a child work toward rewards, and give lots of verbal praise and smiles when a child does well. You could do a “google” search for reward systems for behavior.
11. **In two parent homes, teamwork is best;** parents should work out a plan for who handles which situations and be consistent.
12. **Teach organizational skills.** Schedule a time each day to organize your child’s toys/school items; this can usually be part of a bed-time routine. Palm pilots, phone and watch alarms are helpful. Another example of teaching organizational skills would be to place a bin or box near the front door or garage door for important items.
13. **Clear communication.** Parents often need to remind children with AD/HD frequently of the rules, the schedule, to do homework, etc. Often it’s best to sit

- with a child and make a rule/rewards/consequence list together and then frequently review it.
14. Do not try to establish new rules or lecture the child at a time when he or she is angry; wait until the situation settles and everybody is calmer and then discuss what happened.
  15. Equine assisted psychotherapy (see <http://www.narha.org>) has been shown to help kids with ADHD.
  16. There is no research supporting that herbal or dietary supplements have benefit in treating ADHD; Gingko Biloba may help some people improve attention and concentration.
  17. Great information on ADD and ADHD can be found on the CHADD website, a non profit organization for education, advocacy and support for families and children. [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org).