ADD/ADHD: Holistic and Natural Approaches

Written by Pathways Magazine
Monday, 01 March 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 15 October 2013 09:43

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine have different approaches to diagnosing and treating attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. In the West, ADHD sufferers are usually prescribed anti-depressants or stimulants, such as Ritalin or Adderall. However, while prescription drugs may temporarily alleviate symptoms, they don’t treat the core problems. In addition, parents are often concerned about the effectiveness of prescription medication and the possible side effects. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), ADHD is attributed to an imbalance between yin and yang, the negative and positive phases in the body’s flow of vital energy, or qi. TCM comprises acupuncture, Chinese herbs, Tui-Na massage and nutritional therapy. It’s founded on the belief that good health is a function of inner harmony.

Treatment focuses on correcting the imbalance by applying the yin and yang theory. For example, a child with a yang (active) nature would receive treatment for the hyperactive, impulsive type of ADHD, as opposed to a child with a yin (passive) nature, who would be treated for inattentiveness. Once a pattern is diagnosed, acupuncture, Tui-Na massage and, in some cases, herbs are used to restore balance and a sense of relaxation and well-being. For children and infants, a non-needling modality of acupuncture called Shonishin is recommended before introducing needles. It consists of using small tools in a gentle stroking, rubbing or tapping manner to stimulate the child's qi. Over the years, large strides have been made to treat ADHD with a combination of TCM and lifestyle changes. In cases of mild ADHD, TCM can be used as the sole form of treatment, eliminating the need for prescription drugs. For more severe cases, TCM is often used in conjunction with Western medicine to help lower the dosage of medication needed or to reduce the side effects of prescription drugs.
ADD/ADHD: Holistic and Natural Approaches

Written by Pathways Magazine
Monday, 01 March 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 15 October 2013 09:43

A study found that a supplementation regimen was as effective as Ritalin for children with ADHD, without the latter’s risk of side effects.

By Carolyn Dean, MD, ND, drcarolyndean.com

**Nutritional supplements**

A number of inflammatory foods, food additives and other influences can cause a child to experience symptoms of注意力缺陷多动障碍 (ADHD). The child is likely to have a poor appetite, cackles, is overly sensitive to sounds, smells and things in the environment, and may have learning difficulties. His body and behavior are not at ease.

Children who experience ADHD are usually overactive; they also tend to be fidgety, talkative, restless, impulsive and less focused when they are bored or experiencing anxiety. They may have developed unhealthy eating patterns, such as consuming too much sugar, carbohydrates and caffeine, which will further contribute to hyperactivity.

The child may experience fogginess, irritability, anxiety, mood swings, headaches, depression, obsessions and compulsions. He may have EMF (Electromagnetic Frequency) sensitivities, which can be triggered by traffic lights, microwaves, cell phones, computers, TVs, etc.

**Symptoms**

The symptoms can stem from emotional, social, psychological and biological factors. The child may have stress, depression, anxiety, learning difficulties, inattention, hyperactivity, underactivity, phobias, speech issues, visual and auditory perception problems. He may have food-based sensitivities; the child's immune system may be overreactive to certain foods.

**Diagnosis**

Children may have had many tests, which can be costly and repetitive. It is important to try natural remedies before resorting to medications. Children should be treated as whole beings, not just symptomatically.

**Treatment**

Nutritional supplementation might have beneficial effects on ADHD. A study found that children with ADHD who were fed a diet rich in the amino acids for the neurotransmitter serotonin, and reduced levels of dopamine, had a reduction of symptoms. This may suggest that nutritional therapy can be beneficial for children with ADHD, thus not to resort to medications.

**Symptoms**

Children who experience ADHD may manifest a range of symptoms, including:

- Inattention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Mood swings
- Sleep disturbances
- Behavioral problems
- Learning difficulties
- Executive function difficulties

**Nutritional Therapy**

Nutritional therapy is a holistic approach that seeks to improve gut health and provide essential nutrients to the body. It is important to consider the child’s overall health, including emotional, psychological and social factors. Children with ADHD may benefit from a combination of nutrition and lifestyle changes, such as:

- **Diets:**
  - Gluten-free, casein-free diet
  - Whole foods diet
  - Mediterranean diet
- **Supplements:**
  - Probiotics
  - Omega-3 fatty acids
  - Magnesium
  - Zinc
  - Vitamin B6
- **Behavioral Changes:**
  - Regular exercise
  - Adequate sleep
  - Stress management

**Conclusion**

Nutritional therapy is an effective approach for children with ADHD, providing a safe and natural alternative to medications. It is important to consult with a healthcare professional to develop an individualized treatment plan.

Carolyn Dean, MD, ND, drcarolyndean.com

**References**

- **American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013: ADHD: Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.**
- **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), 2018: ADHD: What is it?**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), 2018: Management of ADHD.**
- **World Health Organization (WHO), 2020: ADHD and other disruptive behavior disorders.**

**Note:**

The information provided is for educational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for medical advice. It is important to consult with a healthcare professional before making any changes to your dietary or lifestyle habits.

© 2010, Pathways Magazine, a publication of the Institute for Natural Healing. All rights reserved. 2010-2020.