

Fish Oils and Attention Deficit Disorder

Summaries of the latest research concerning fish oils and attention deficit disorder

Attention-deficit disorder in adults

SUNBURY, OHIO. Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by hyperactivity, emotional instability, poor coordination, short attention span, poor concentration, impulsiveness, and learning disorders. It is very common among school-age children with an incidence of between four and twenty per cent. Dr. Eugene Arnold, MD, Professor of Psychiatry at Ohio State University, points out that ADHD is not just a childhood disorder, but can be found among adults as well. Dr. Arnold has just completed an exhaustive survey of alternative treatments for adult ADHD. Although none of these treatments have undergone strictly controlled clinical trials some of them may nevertheless be worth a try. Relaxation training, biofeedback, meditation and massage are safe therapies that may have benefits. Fish oil supplementation, vitamins and minerals (in RDA dosages), herbal and homeopathic remedies, laser acupuncture, and anti-fungal (Candida) therapy may also be of benefit. Thyroid dysfunction and chronic lead poisoning are possible causes of ADHD and should be investigated and treated if necessary. Chelation is effective in removing lead. Zinc and magnesium supplementation may be useful if a deficiency is present and St. John's wort (hypericum) should at least be given a pilot study according to Dr. Arnold. *Arnold, L. Eugene. Alternative treatments for adults with ADHD. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 931, June 2001, pp. 310-41/*

Docosahexaenoic acid deficiency may be key to ADHD

WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA. It is estimated that 3-5% of the school-age population in the United States suffer from attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Prominent symptoms of this disorder are a poor attention span, inability to complete tasks, hyperactivity, and a tendency to interrupt others. Almost one quarter of children with ADHD also suffer from one or more specific learning disabilities in math, spelling or reading. A study first reported in 1995 linked ADHD to a deficiency of certain long-chain fatty acids. These acids (arachidonic, eicosapentaenoic, and docosahexaenoic acids) are all metabolites of the two essential fatty acids, linoleic acid (omega-6) and alpha-linolenic acid (omega-3). Researchers at Purdue University are now leaning towards the conclusion that a subclinical deficiency in docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is responsible for the abnormal behaviour of children with ADHD. They point out that supplementation with a long-chain omega-6 fatty acid (evening primrose oil) has been unsuccessful in ameliorating ADHD and believe this is because ADHD-children need more omega-3 acids rather than more omega-6 acids. The researchers also found that children with ADHD were breast fed less often as infants than were children without ADHD. Breast milk is an excellent source of DHA. A study is now underway to investigate the effect of oral supplementation with DHA on the behaviour of ADHD-children. *Burgess, John R., et al. Long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids in children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Vol. 71 (suppl), January 2000, pp. 327S- 30S /*

Fish oils may help dyslexic children

GUILDFORD, UNITED KINGDOM. Dyslexia is a fairly common condition which involves difficulties in learning to read and write, mirror reversals of letters and words, and poor short-term memory. Dyslexia is closely related to dyspraxia (problems with coordination and muscle control) and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. It is estimated that about 10% of the populations of the United States and the United Kingdom suffer from dyslexia and 4% are severely affected. There was a 3-fold increase in the prevalence of learning disorders in the USA over the period 1976 to 1993 and 80% of the new cases involve.