

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Edwin Lau

## New Findings About ADHD: Part II Alternative Solutions

*Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a commonly diagnosed condition in children. While standard ADHD treatment uses stimulant drugs, Dr. Lau believes there are a number of effective, nondrug interventions for children with ADHD that can calm symptoms and improve overall well-being.*

### ADHD Review

As outlined in Part I of this two-part series, Dr. Lau and many child wellness advocates uphold that ADHD is grossly overdiagnosed. Most concerning is the widespread practice of treating ADHD youngsters with powerful stimulant and amphetamine medications.

Recent research illustrates that brain differences in children with ADHD may resolve during the teenage years. Consequently, some scientists speculate that prescribing ADHD medication to young children may be jumping the gun — and could do more harm than good.

Let's look at some alternatives to ADHD medications that really work.

### Chiropractic for Attention Problems

Although doctors of chiropractic do not specifically treat psychological problems like ADHD, a number of studies show that chiropractic intervention can make a genuine difference for children with ADHD. And chiropractic can help eliminate the need for medications. Ask Dr. Lau for details.

But just how does chiropractic improve attention? One theory suggests that problems in the spine (vertebral subluxations) may affect the central nervous system in a manner that pre-

disposes a child to emotional problems.

Vertebral subluxation occurs when the vertebrae (spinal bones) are subjected to functional or structural changes, which affect the spine and how it supports the body. People often adapt physically to these changes in ways that trigger disturbances in the central nervous system, as well as in other organs throughout the body. Naturally, this condition compromises general health, and influences behavior and emotional well-being.

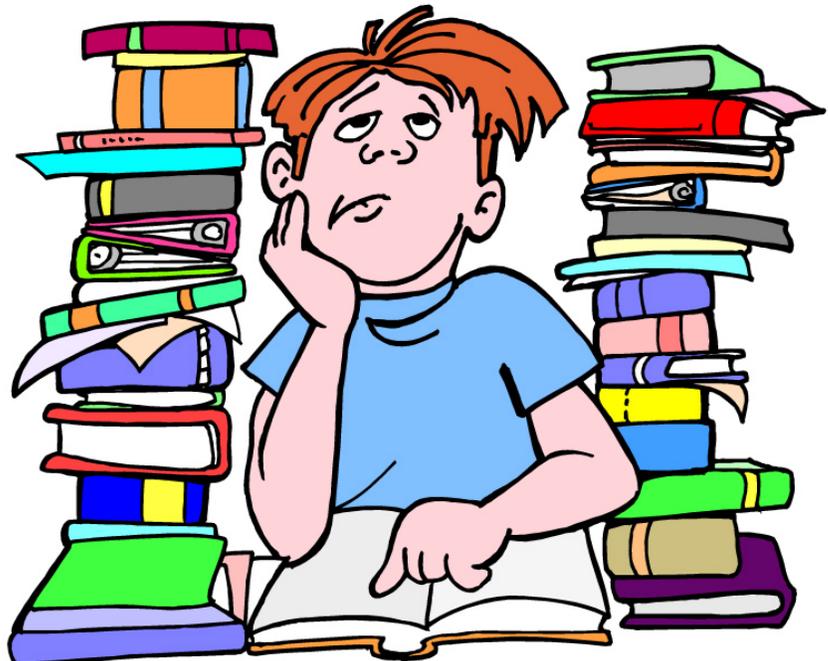
Another theory holds that physical pain and discomfort make it impossi-

ble for a child to pay full attention. Chiropractic care alleviates discomfort, in turn upping attention span.

### Research on Chiropractic and ADHD

A study at Mississippi State University found significant progress in hyperactive kids who underwent chiropractic care. The majority improved after a series of visits; their behavioral scores increased, as did their interest levels. The study concluded that chiropractic manipulation is potentially an important nondrug intervention for hyperactivity (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1989;12:353).

Another analysis determined that correcting the vertebral subluxations of a child with ADHD appeared to reduce his pain and boost concentration, allowing him to learn and “sit still” (*JVSR* 2006:1-6).



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A recent case study looked at a 5-year-old child who had unsuccessful pharmacological treatment for ADHD, even though the pediatrician had tried many different drugs. Then the child's parents decided to try chiropractic. After 35 visits over eight weeks, the outcome was remarkable. Behavior improved, and the child exhibited no further symptoms. The pediatrician discontinued medication treatment for ADHD (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2004;27:e14).

Another case centers on a 4-year-old boy diagnosed with ADHD and other developmental delays. He experienced temper tantrums, poor speech quality, reduced short-term memory skills and was easily distracted. His care included a combination of chiropractic, special diet and nutritional supplementation (*JVSR* 2007:1-4). His mother and teachers reported tremendous improvement in all aspects of his condition.

### Other Alternatives for ADHD



Along with regular chiropractic care, doctors of chiropractic encourage other types of drug-free strategies for quelling attention problems. Recent scientific evidence underscores the success of many of these approaches.

### Mindfulness Meditation

Hot-off-the-presses research conducted on 24 adults and eight teenagers found that eight weeks of mindfulness meditation improved ADHD symptoms and bolstered attention. Plus, participants had less depression and anxiety. Researchers concluded that this type of technique is a feasible

intervention for ADHD (*J Atten Disord* 2007 Epub).

Another experiment conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison found similar positive results. Interestingly, study subjects were not meditating when their improvements were assessed. Researchers theorized that learning a meditation technique actually changes the way people use their brains.

### Behavior Modification

Some doctors and caregivers add behavior modification to the treatment plan for ADHD. This type of therapy uses reinforcement, both positive and negative, to alter a person's behavior.

### Massage and Acupuncture

Research indicates that massage is helpful for several pediatric conditions, including ADHD and depression (*West J Med* 2001;174:272-76).

Another promising option is acupuncture, say researchers.

### Supplementation

A plethora of studies illustrate that omega-3 fatty acids, either from fish or plant sources, clearly support optimal brain function. B vitamins may also be advantageous for ADHD sufferers.

Several botanical and herbal extracts have appeared effective for ADHD. One study of 36 children, between 3 and 17 years old, involved a combination of American ginseng extract, *Panax quinquefolium* and *Gingko biloba*. After just two weeks, 74 percent of participants scored higher on a standard ADHD assessment (Conners' Parent Rating Scale), which measures behavior (*J Psychiatry Neurosci* 2001;26:221-8).

A newer study from the Slovak Republic tested a potent polyphenol complex in the form of pine bark extract, or pycnogenol. Scientists learned that pycnogenol sparks chemical changes in the brain, which produced much less hyperactive behavior in the study subjects (*Nutri Neurosci* 2007;10:151-7).

*Remember never give a child any supplement without first consulting with his or her doctor. Also, never discontinue any medication without consulting the prescribing doctor.*

### Exercise

Regular exercise often does wonders for youths with attention disorders. For instance, research finds that simply getting fathers and children involved in special sports programs together can develop better behavior and reduce tension in ADHD kids.

### What to Avoid

Sometimes the best solution for ADHD is what you don't do. New evidence confirms that food additives harm children. One study drew clear links between certain food additives, specifically the preservative sodium benzoate, and hyperactivity. Avoiding such ingredients by checking food labels can help prevent parents from inadvertently making their children's ADHD symptoms worse.

In addition, adopting organic, all-natural diets, free of additives, preservatives, processed foods, "fast-foods" and packaged foods, may produce dramatic differences in youngsters with ADHD.

### ADHD: A New Horizon

Today, there is a gradual shift in treating ADHD. After nearly 70 years of stimulant therapy, scientific evidence is revealing effective options to drug-ging kids who have challenges focusing.

If you have concerns about attention problems with respect to a child, a family member or even yourself, don't wait another day. This chiropractic office wants to work with you to find real solutions for ADHD.

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