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Kiddie-calmers

With the help and advice of nutritional therapist Emma Wells, Wave takes a look at how supplements may be helpful when treating children's health conditions

In the whole, when it comes to supplements for children, it's difficult to prescribe specific recommended amounts as differing factors can effect dosage," says Emma. "For example, two six-year-olds could have very different needs and requirements due to different weights, or various health concerns – it's important to bear this in mind.

"You also need to assess the quality of the supplements. Although some high street retailers can provide very cheap supplements, the actual form that the nutrients come in may not be easily available to the body and hence may in effect be a waste of money – spending a little more on good, reputable brands like Biocare (www.biocare.co.uk), who do some great powdered and liquid supplements that are easy to hide in foods or smoothies, could well be a better place to start."



Emma notes that some specific health conditions which are becoming more common in children these days include dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autism. Attention to nutrition and courses of supplements may be beneficial in all of these cases.

Here are some guidelines but for more tailored advice see a trained professional.

DYSLEXIA AND DYSPRAXIA

Dyslexia is characterised by specific problems in learning to read and write, due to subtle problems in visual perception. Associated features include problems in distinguishing between left and right, poor direction sense, difficulties with time and subtle problems with both visual and auditory perception. The overlap with ADHD is around 30 to 50 per cent, and with dyspraxia it appears to be even higher. Dyspraxia is characterised by clumsiness and difficulties in carrying out

complex, sequenced actions, such as catching a ball, tying up shoelaces or doing up buttons. The condition results in extremely poor handwriting and difficulties with organisation, attention and concentration. Often too, there can be challenges involving mood and behaviour, such as impulsivity or temper tantrums. These children can be hypersensitive to touch, smells and sounds, and they may prefer repetitive or familiar activities, because they can find novel situations very stressful.

Nutrition

When it comes to nutrition, minimise your child's intake of sugar and refined or processed foods, fried foods and saturated fat from meat and dairy as much as you can. Ensure an optimal intake of essential fats from seeds, cold pressed oils and oily fish. In addition, make sure they are receiving sufficient antioxidants, especially Vitamin E, to help protect them from damage. It may be worth having a hair mineral analysis to check for any heavy metal toxicities. Fish oils are important: the omega-3 component is particularly essential for sharp brain function because neurones are especially vulnerable to EPA/DHA deficiency. The results of an Oxford-Durham study were recently published, showing that three months of supplemental fish oil capsules can help the reading, spelling and concentration of children with dyspraxia to improve very significantly (*Paediatrics* 2005, 115(5): 1360-66)

Supplements to consider

- The standard dosage of omega-3 in the scientific research of dyslexia and related disorders should ideally be around 500 mg EPA per day. In some cases, an even higher dosage is necessary. The most common fish oil supplements contain EPA and DHA in a ratio of approximately 3:2, although the total EPA and DHA concentrations can fluctuate considerably. However, in studies at the University of Oxford in relationship with the treatment of Dyslexia, an omega-3 supplement with an EPA/DHA ratio of at least 5:1 is used.



ATTENTION DEFICIT (HYPERACTIVE) DISORDER (ADD/ADHD)

ADD or ADHD is seen more often in boys than in girls and the onset is usually before the age of three, although it is not often picked up until school age. Characteristics include: hyperactivity, emotional instability, co-ordination deficit, short attention span and poor concentration, impulsiveness, specific learning disabilities, disorders of speech and hearing. The main foods implicated in exacerbating the condition are sugar, red, yellow and blue dye, preservatives, cow's milk, soya, chocolate, grapes, salicylates, peanuts, wheat, corn, eggs, tomatoes, apples, fish, and oats. Other issues to consider are nutrient deficiency, digestive disturbance and/or malabsorption or malnutrition, thyroid involvement and heavy metals (particularly lead).

Nutrition

When it comes to your child's diet, check for food allergies and/or intolerances. Have your child eat five small meals per day to help balance blood sugar levels. Avoid sugar and refined carbohydrates at all costs! Avoid salicylate-containing foods such as almonds, apples, apricots, cucumbers, currants, plums, tomatoes, oranges, peaches, dates, prunes, dried raisins, pineapple, guava, sultanas, radish, chicory, peppers, gherkin, courgette, chilli and all berries. Avoid caffeine and caffeine-containing products, carbonated/fizzy drinks, bacon/ham/pork, and ketchup. Consider eliminating all gluten containing foods.

Supplements to consider

- EFAs
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin B Complex: children's version with breakfast
- Vitamin B1 deficiency may be implicated in ADHD
- Vitamin B6 beneficial for the production of Serotonin
- Calcium deficiency may be an underlying cause of some cases of ADHD.
- Magnesium
- ADHD patients have been found to have low (up to 50% lower) serum Zinc levels.

For food sensitivity:

- Children's probiotic
- Herbs (it is recommended that you consult a herbalist)
- Passiflora
- Avena (check for gluten sensitivity before administering)

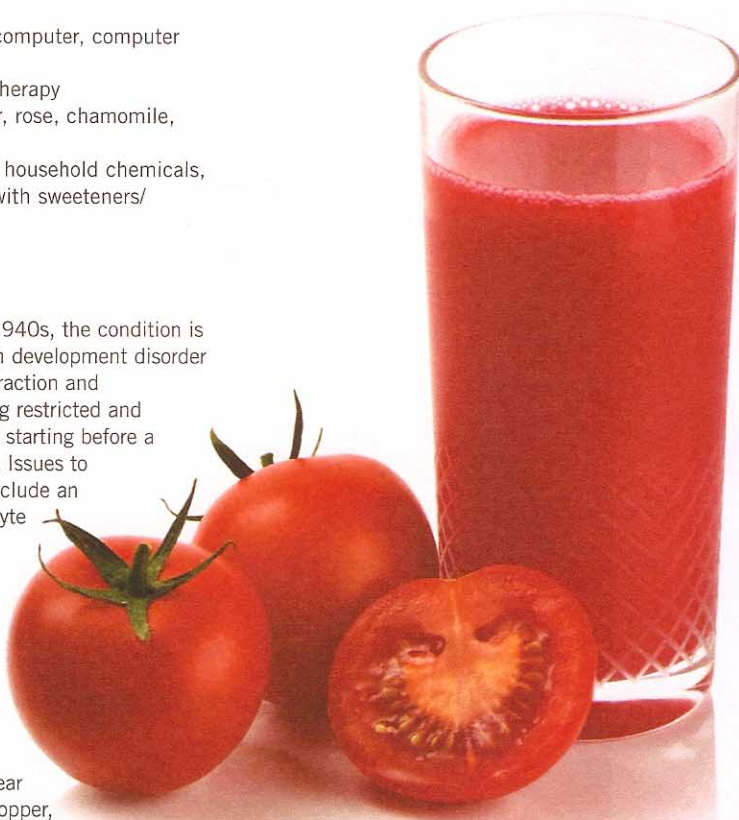
- Other herbs include: chamomile, ginkgo, hawthorn, bacopa, rosemary

Lifestyle

Exercise, yoga/pilates
Flower essences
Limit exposure to TV, computer, computer games, mobiles etc
Homeopathy or hypnotherapy
Essential oils: lavender, rose, chamomile, vanilla, jasmine.
Avoid over exposure of household chemicals, perfumes, toothpaste with sweeteners/ preservatives etc

AUTISM

First described in the 1940s, the condition is characterised as a brain development disorder that impairs social interaction and communication, causing restricted and repetitive behaviour, all starting before a child is three-years-old. Issues to consider with autism include an EFA deficiency, electrolyte balance, heavy metal toxicity, and nutrient deficiency. Ideally, treatment would aim to support the digestion, heal Leaky Gut syndrome, treat Candida, boost the immune function, balance electrolytes, clear heavy metals such as copper,



mercury and lead, eliminate allergens and treat other symptoms such as allergies, constipation and mood disturbance. Remove harsh household cleaning products such as washing powders etc.

Nutrition

A naturopathic diet would be a good one to start with for autism, boosting nutrient dense foods and super-foods. Avoid yeast, including barley, malt and vinegar. Avoid dairy, saturated fats, additives, preservatives, colourings, flavourings and refined carbohydrates. Boost complex carbohydrates, essential fatty acids. Eliminate caffeine-containing foods such as coffee, tea and chocolate. Work on maintaining blood sugar levels and use only purified water.

Supplements to consider

- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Probiotics
- Magnesium
- Zinc
- Chromium
- Silica
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin B-complex
- Celloids to balance electrolytes e.g. SP or SS, MP, CP, PP or PS or PC
- Flower essences/homeopathics

Nutritional therapist and health writer Emma Wells (Dip ION) can be contacted on 01273 775480 or visit her website at www.smartnutrition.co.uk



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