



FaithWorks Counseling
Dr. Debbie Harnois
2901 University Avenue, Suite 17
Columbus, GA 31907
706.366.9691
www.FaithWorksCounseling17.com

NUTRITION GUIDE FOR ADHD CHILDREN

Good nutrition does not “cure” ADHD, but it can significantly support:

- Attention and focus
- Emotional regulation
- Energy levels
- Sleep quality
- Overall brain development

Children with ADHD often benefit from **steady blood sugar, adequate protein, healthy fats, and reduced highly processed foods.**

Key Nutrition Goals

For a child with ADHD, nutrition should aim to:

- Support brain development 
- Prevent energy crashes 
- Improve focus and mood 
- Reduce irritability and impulsivity

1. Prioritize Protein (Very Important!)

Protein helps regulate neurotransmitters involved in attention and focus. **Aim:** Protein at **every meal and snack**

Good protein choices:

- Eggs
- Chicken or turkey
- Fish (salmon, tuna)
- Greek yogurt
- Cheese
- Nut butters (peanut, almond, sunflower)
- Beans and lentils
- Tofu

Easy ideas:

- Scrambled eggs with toast
- Apple slices with peanut butter
- Yogurt with berries
- Cheese stick + whole-grain crackers

2. Choose Complex Carbohydrates

Simple sugars can cause spikes and crashes that worsen ADHD symptoms.

Better choices:

- Whole-grain bread, pasta, rice
- Oatmeal
- Sweet potatoes
- Brown rice
- Quinoa
- Fruits and vegetables

Limit:

- Sugary cereals
- White bread
- Candy
- Pastries
- Sweetened drinks

3. Include Healthy Fats for Brain Health

Healthy fats are essential for brain development and emotional regulation.

Best sources:

- Avocados
- Olive oil
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut butters
- Fatty fish (salmon)
- Chia or flax seeds

4. Keep Blood Sugar Stable

Children with ADHD are especially sensitive to blood sugar swings.

Helpful tips:

- Don't skip meals
- Offer snacks every 2–3 hours
- Pair carbs with protein or fat
- Avoid sugary snacks on an empty stomach

5. Support with Key Nutrients

Some children with ADHD may be low in certain nutrients.

Important nutrients include:

- **Iron** – lean meats, beans, spinach
- **Zinc** – meat, dairy, pumpkin seeds
- **Magnesium** – leafy greens, nuts, whole grains
- **Omega-3 fatty acids** – fish, flaxseed, walnuts

 **Always consult a pediatrician before starting supplements.**

6. Watch for Food Sensitivities (Individualized)

Some children may be sensitive to:

- Artificial food dyes

- Preservatives
- Excess sugar
- Certain additives

If symptoms worsen after specific foods, consider keeping a simple food-and-behavior log and discuss concerns with your child's pediatrician.

7. Hydration Matters

Dehydration can worsen:

- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Concentration difficulties

Encourage:

- Water throughout the day
- Milk with meals
- Limit juice and avoid soda

Sample Day of Balanced Eating

Breakfast

- Scrambled eggs
- Whole-grain toast
- Fruit
- Milk or water

Snack

- Apple slices + peanut butter

Lunch

- Turkey and cheese sandwich on whole-grain bread
- Carrot sticks
- Yogurt

Snack

- Cheese stick + crackers

Dinner

- Grilled chicken or salmon
- Brown rice or sweet potato
- Steamed vegetables

Helpful Parent Tips

- ✓ Keep meals simple and consistent
- ✓ Involve your child in food choices
- ✓ Offer new foods without pressure
- ✓ Model healthy eating habits
- ✓ Focus on progress, not perfection

Remember

Nutrition is **one piece** of ADHD support—alongside routines, sleep, behavioral strategies, and emotional support. Small changes can make a meaningful difference over time.