



FaithWorks Counseling

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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.