Negative Outcome on Study of DHA supplementation for ADHD. A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA—a fatty acid) supplementation was conducted with 63 children who were all receiving effective maintenance therapy with stimulant medication for ADHD. After four months without medication, and with therapy of DHA or placebo, authors concluded that the therapy raised the plasma phospholipid levels but did not improve ADHD symptoms.


Editor: Studies of single nutrients often tell only part of the story. See the next report on a different fatty acid and zinc.

Zinc as a Cofactor for Metabolism of Primrose Oil for ADHD. The relationship of zinc nutrition to Efaomol (evening primrose oil) and stimulant effects was analyzed for an 18-subject study. Subjects were categorized as zinc-adequate, borderline zinc, and zinc-deficient. Efaomol benefit for ADHD symptoms was evident only with borderline zinc subjects. It was suggested that zinc nutrition may be important for treatment of ADHD, and if Efaomol benefits ADHD, it possibly does so by improving or compensating for borderline zinc nutrition.


Combination American Ginseng and Gingko Biloba Effective for ADHD. Thirty-six children, aged 3 to 17, with ADHD were studied with a combination herbal product containing American ginseng extract, Panax quinquefolium, and Gingko biloba extract (AD-FX; see note). Any medication therapy the participants were on was maintained without change. Parents completed the revised, long version of the Conners’ Parent Rating Scale to assess problem behaviors at 2- and 4-weeks of supplementation. After four weeks of treatment, the proportion of subjects exhibiting improvement ranged from 44% for the social problems attribute to 74% for the hyperactive-impulsive attribute. Only two in the study reported adverse effects that were considered related to the study medication. The authors suggest that AD-FX treatment may improve symptoms of ADHD and more research should be conducted.


Editor: There are different types and qualities of ginseng and gingko preparations. AD-FX contains an extract of American ginseng and a biologically standardized extract of Ginkgo biloba. The developers claim that this unique extract blend stimulates dopamine receptors in the executive center of the brain. For more information on the product, check at a natural food store or see www.herbtech.com.

Alternative Treatments for Adults with ADHD. Twenty-four alternative treatments for children with ADHD were identified and grouped according to efficacy and degree of scientific documentation in 1994. Dr. L. Arnold, of Ohio State University, recently completed a similar review for alternative approaches for adults with ADHD. His summary statements include: Oligoantigenic (few-foods) diets have convincing double-blind evidence of effectiveness for a subgroup of children but do not appear to be as helpful for adults, based on current studies. Enzyme-potentiated desensitization, relaxation/EMG biofeedback, and chelation [deleading] all have controlled studies suggesting positive response. Iron supplementation, magnesium supplementation, Chinese herbs, EEG biofeedback, massage, meditation, mirror feedback, channel-specific perceptual training, and vestibular stimulation all have promising pilot data, many with controlled studies. Single-vitamin megadosage has some compelling initial data. Laser acupuncture is one area that may be more helpful to adults than children. Essential fatty acid supplementation has promising systematic case-control data, but clinical trials are equivocal. RDA vitamin supplementation, non-Chinese herbs, homeopathic remedies, and antifungal therapy have no systematic data in ADHD. Megadose multivitamin combinations were considered ineffective for many patients and possibly dangerous for some. Thyroid treatment is effective in the presence of documented thyroid abnormality.
