

Attention and Diet

Supporting children's focus through everyday food choices and sensory strategies

While diet doesn't cause or cure attention and concentration issues, certain foods can support mood, energy, and concentration.

BALANCED DIET

Carbohydrates

Choose whole grains, pasta, brown rice, and potatoes with skin for slow-release energy

Limit sugary snacks and fizzy drinks – quick energy can lead to crashes and mood swings

High Sugar & Fat

Limit chocolate, sweets, fried foods – may affect behaviour and energy levels

Fruit & Vegetables

Aim for 5 portions daily (fresh, tinned, frozen, dried, or juiced)

Rich in fibre, vitamins, and essential nutrients for brain development

Protein

Include foods like meat, fish, eggs, beans – vital for growth and brain development

Oily Fish & Omega-3

Oily fish (e.g. salmon) contains omega-3 fatty acids which may aid concentration

Hydration

Aim for 6-8 glasses of water daily, a clear bottle in the fridge can help kids track their own intake. Try to avoid or limit fizzy drinks, tea, and other caffeine containing foods such as chocolate.

Dairy

Aim for 3 servings daily of milk, yogurt, or cheese for calcium and growth

If you notice behaviour changes after dairy, speak to a dietician

Watch Out for E-Numbers

Some food additives may impact hyperactivity:

E102, E110, E122, E133, E211

(Check labels when possible)



Oral Sensory & Smell-Based Strategies

Some children focus better with input to the mouth (oral) or nose (olfactory) systems. Ways to stimulate this could be:

Hydration and Oral Input - Use a straw bottle – sucking provides calming input and supports control

Chewy Tools - Use chewy snacks (bagels, gum, fruit leather,) or a chewy topper to pencils for subtle sensory input during task. Sucking smoothies through a straw/ sucking with resistance can support self-regulation and calm.

Crunchy, Cold & Sour - Offer orange wedges, grapefruit, or lemonade for tired or sluggish children- these textures/flavours can help boost alertness

Top Tips for Mealtimes

Keep sugary snacks out of sight

Use a visual meal & snack planner

Limit distractions during meals

Involve your child in food shopping & cooking

Use reward charts for trying new foods



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