



Great Lakes
Naturopathic Centre

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Wellness

REVIEW

GIVE YOUR CHILD THE BEST START IN LIFE



Helping Children Reach Their Full Potential

We all want the best for our children, and this includes helping them to develop and grow both physically and mentally. With 1 in 16 school-aged children now being diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and 1 in 91 being diagnosed with autism, we must begin asking "Is there something more that we can do?" Even without a diagnosis, many children struggle with various aspects of cognitive function and learning, including memory, judgement, problem solving, and language development. Poor learning or behaviour needn't be an inevitable part of life. With some simple strategies, you can help your children achieve their full potential.

Keeping Your Kids Focused and Alert

A child's education forms the foundation from which they learn about the world around them and develop social and behavioural skills. A poor start in life can have lifelong effects on learning and social development. Given the impact that education can have on shaping our children's future, it is important we give them the best possible start in life.

For some kids, getting the brain to quieten down and switch off from distractions can be a huge challenge, both in the classroom and at home. This can contribute to poor concentration, decreased focus, and learning difficulties. The good news is that there are certain nutrients and herbs that work together to improve concentration and cognitive function, reduce background 'noise' or distractions and stop our children from being left behind at school.

Good Fats for a Great Brain

Supporting your child's brain health can be as simple as starting with omega-3 essential fatty acids, such as those found in fish. Unfortunately, many children are not eating enough oily fish such as salmon, tuna, and sardines, and are deficient in these healthy fats which are crucial for brain development. Deficiencies in EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), the active components in fish oil, have been associated with behavioural symptoms in children. DHA in particular comes under the spotlight, as higher doses of DHA have been found to significantly improve attention and cognition in children. Supplementing with highly purified and concentrated fish oils containing therapeutic levels of EPA and DHA is therefore vital to support the developing brain.



Build a Healthy Brain

Phospholipids are another type of healthy fat that plays a key role not only in nervous system function, but also lays a sound structural foundation for growing brains. Phospholipids, such as phosphatidylcholine and phosphatidylserine, are building blocks in the structure of every cell membrane in the body, including those in the brain and the nervous system. As a result, these lipids are important for brain and nervous system health, as well as supporting memory, learning and behaviour. In fact, phosphatidylserine supplementation has been shown to yield positive results in reducing symptoms of inattention and hyperactivity in children with ADHD.

Boosting Brain Power – It's all in the Herbs!

Herbs, such as green tea (Camellia sinensis) and brahmi (Bacopa monnieri), have proven clinically effective in improving children's cognitive function. Green tea contains a rare amino acid known as L-theanine. At therapeutic doses, L-theanine made children more calm but alert, with an increased attention span and improved memory – all important for maximising learning potential. Brahmi is another herb that is particularly beneficial for supporting mental performance and nervous system function. Studies have found that when used for a period of 12 weeks, brahmi significantly enhanced memory and information processing, and reduced anxiety.

Nourish Those Nerves

Along with essential lipids and herbs, a number of nutrients are also valuable in supporting cognitive function in children. Iodine and Vitamin D are essential nutrients for healthy brain development and function which are commonly deficient in children in Australia and New Zealand. Healthy brain and nerve signalling is also supported with nutrients such as activated vitamin B6, zinc and magnesium. The best way to ensure your children are getting the nutrients they need is to provide fresh, healthy food including fruit and vegetables, and quality protein at every meal. Healthy kids also need plenty of play and physical activity, and adequate rest and sleep.

Watch Your Child Thrive

Impaired cognitive function and behavioural development can greatly interfere with a child's ability to learn about the world around them and function fully. Talk to Tony if your child struggles with concentration and lacks the focus required for optimal learning, or exhibits signs of hyperactivity or other behavioural issues. By encouraging a healthy diet and lifestyle, and providing the essential nutrients required for healthy brain development and function, you can truly give your child the best possible start in life.