

Dietary Changes Help Some Children With ADHD

The story is reprinted from materials provided by University of Copenhagen.

ScienceDaily (Apr. 24, 2012) — Together with child and adolescent psychiatrists, researchers from the University of Copenhagen have just completed an extensive report which reviews the studies which have been done so far on the significance of diet for children and young people with ADHD. The report shows that there are potential benefits in changing the diets of children with ADHD, but that key knowledge in the area is still lacking.

The comprehensive report covers the scientific literature on the significance of diet for children with ADHD: “Our conclusion is that more research is required in the area. There is a lot to suggest that by changing their diet, it is possible to improve the condition for some ADHD children,” says professor in paediatric nutrition Kim Fleischer Michaelsen from the Department of Human Nutrition at the Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, who is heading the study.

Professor Kim Fleischer stresses that more research is needed: “Several of the studies show, for example, that fatty acids from fatty fish moderate the symptoms. Other studies detect no effect. Elimination diets are also promising. These look at whether there is anything in the diet which the children cannot consume without adverse side effects. However, we still lack knowledge about which children with ADHD benefit from dietary changes, how positive the effect is in the long term and what the changes mean for children’s health.”

Dietary changes not beneficial for everyone

The report shows that not all ADHD children benefit from changes to their diet, and that there are still many unknown factors. Tine Houmann, a consultant at the Centre for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, says:

“There are different types of ADHD, and the disturbance is probably due to both genetic and environmental factors. We know that children with ADHD react very differently to both medication and dietary changes. We therefore need to study which children benefit from dietary changes, and whether we can identify genetic or environmental factors that can predict this.”

Bigger studies needed

The experts hope that, by acquiring more knowledge on the subject, it is possible to reduce the use of medication and instead develop special dietary advice for the children: “It is promising that many research results indicate that dietary changes can help some ADHD children. However, it is crucial that bigger studies on dietary changes are conducted on children with ADHD to see how effective this is and how long the benefits last,” says Kim Fleischer Michaelsen, while stressing that parents should always seek professional advice before changing their children’s diet.