How Magnesium Supplements Could Benefit Children With ADHD

by DR. DONNA

Low Magnesium and ADHD

If you have a child with ADHD, you can recognize the behaviors: irritability, hyperactivity, fidgeting, and other frustrating symptoms. Did you know that researchers have found a link between magnesium levels and ADHD? It is entirely possible that by providing your child with supplemental magnesium, you could see an improvement in a short period of time.

Functions of Magnesium

Magnesium is a mineral essential to both human and animal health. Without it, we wouldn't be able to survive. A magnesium deficiency can make life miserable. Magnesium is involved in DNA replication, our metabolic process, the transporting of potassium and calcium ions, as well as cell proliferation. New research links it to signaling messages within the body to the cells.

What Happens with Deficiency

A magnesium deficiency can contribute to hardening of the arteries, heart disease, blood clots, heart attack, high blood pressure, arrhythmias and congestive heart failure. If that weren't all, it is also linked to diabetes, disorders of the digestive tract, liver cirrhosis, thyroid disorders and parathyroid disorders. There is a clear link between ADHD and low levels of magnesium; a magnesium deficiency worsens the symptoms of ADHD.

Low levels of magnesium are known to cause inflammation and to boost levels of free radicals within the body. If one has high levels of free radicals in the brain, it is likely that the brain and nervous system are inflamed. This could explain such drastic behavioral changes.

Further evidence that the two conditions are related lies in the examination of children with a rare genetic disorder, called familial hypomagnesaemia, or low levels of magnesium. In one study of nine children with the disorder, hyperactivity, irritability, sleep and speech problems as well as finger sucking were observed. The children had mild mental retardation and speech disorders.

Ways to Increase Your Child's Magnesium Levels

There are three primary ways to supplement your child's magnesium levels: diet, supplements, and baths or topical gels.

1. **Diet.** While a healthy diet contributes to general health, it is not a particularly strong method for increasing magnesium levels. Especially for children, who tend fall back into their old eating habits. There will be constant reminders to eat more leafy greens, nuts, seeds, cocoa, and grains, which may grow tiresome. Furthermore, if your child has a magnesium deficiency, it means he needs more than a "regular amount"; he or she would need extra magnesium, on top of their regular RDA to correct a deficiency.

2. **Supplements.** Supplemental magnesium is easy to obtain and administer. If your child is between 4 and 8 years old, the RDA is 130 mg; 9 to 13 years old, the RDA is 240 mg. Children between the ages of 14 and 18 need 410 mg (boys) and 360 mg (girls). A nutritionist prescribing magnesium will give a minimum of these amounts that match the age of the child. However, too much magnesium can be toxic, so it is important to consult a nutritionist. You might opt to add a supplement of 200 mg for younger children and 400 mg daily for older children, while encouraging them to eat an ounce of almonds daily (which adds another 80 mg of magnesium).
3. **Baths/Topical Magnesium.** It helps to add ½ cup Epsom salts to the water when your child is bathing. The skin will absorb minerals from the bathwater, and although you can't count on a specified amount of magnesium using this method, it may help when your child is particularly irritable! Similar magnesium gels may be purchased online and may be rubbed into the skin.

Try one of the methods and let me know what happens!