# Herbal Alternatives to Medications for the Treatment of ADHD

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

## Herbal Remedies for ADHD

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is commonly diagnosed in childhood. However, it persists throughout the lifespan. As the mother of an adult son who has struggled with the condition his entire life, I am always on the lookout for effective, safe tools that will make life easier for him and other people who are affected by ADHD.

Some people who have ADHD benefit dramatically from the use of medications, often stimulant drugs. However, pharmaceuticals are not for everyone. All ADHD medications may precipitate undesirable side effects. Stimulants can be addicting and may be abused. As a result, many individuals turn to complementary and alternative treatments for ADHD in hopes that they will be effective, yet not cause harmful reactions.

The use of herbs as part of a holistic plan to relieve the distress that ADHD causes is an outstanding option for many individuals.

### Use the Ayurvedic Herb, Brahmi, to Boost Brain Function

Brahmi, which is scientifically known as bacopa monnieri, is an Indian herb that has been used for over three thousand years. Bacopa may improve your memory. Some studies indicate that bacopa makes decision making easier. It may improve your ability to focus, and help you to complete tasks in a timely manner. You may sleep better, and feel more relaxed.

Some people experience gastrointestinal upsets, such as diarrhea, when they take bacopa. If you experience any undesirable effects, consider reducing the amount of bacopa you consume, or discontinuing its use. Experts agree that more research is needed to evaluate the benefits of bacopa; however, it does appear that the herb may be useful if you have ADHD.

### Drink Green Tea and Sleep Better

Many people who have ADHD have difficulty sleeping. If you take medications to treat ADHD, they may keep you awake at night.

It might seem strange to think that green tea, which contains caffeine and other stimulating compounds, may help you to sleep better. Green tea may help you to rest because it contains L-theanine, which improves sleep patterns. L-theanine has been approved as a treatment for ADHD in Europe and Japan for over 20 years.

Researchers conducted a study of school-aged boys. (Lyon M, et al.2011) They gave half of the children 200 milligrams of L-theanine twice daily. The children who received L-theanine slept better than those who received a placebo, an inactive supplement. They did not fall asleep any faster than the children who received the placebo; nor did they experience feelings of drowsiness afterwards, but they experienced a more restful sleep.

L- Theanine promotes relaxation and reduces anxiety. It stabilizes mood swings and aids concentration. You may want to consider drinking green tea as a beverage or purchasing it in the form of a supplement.

While the researchers did not address the stimulating aspects of green tea, perhaps some of the benefits may be related to those effects. Stimulant drugs reduce symptoms of ADHD, so it may be that the caffeine in the green tea provides similar benefits. Green tea is also rich in antioxidants, which protect your entire body, so in addition to reducing signs of ADHD, your general level of wellness will be optimized.

*Next page: herbal remedies to improve performance in school and promote relaxation.*

**Ginkgo Improves Behavior and Increases Performance in School**

While you may think of gingko as an herb that helps older adults preserve their abilities to remember and think clearly, it offers benefits for younger people too. Gingko is one of the well-researched herbs on earth. It offers many benefits if you or a loved one has ADHD.

Gingko may be a useful alternative to the use of conventional medication. While the positive effects of the herb are not usually as pronounced as the benefits obtained with the use of stimulant drugs, side effects are fewer and there is no risk of dependency developing.

Some people do respond quite dramatically to therapy with gingko. It works particularly well when combined with American ginseng. Gingko must be consistently used for six weeks or longer before its benefits appear. The recommended adult dose is 40 to 160 milligrams of the standardized extract three times daily. Do not use the raw seeds, as they may be toxic; otherwise the herb is safe for long-term use. Ginkgo has been used to treat ADHD in Europe for decades.

Avoid using gingko if you take blood thinners. Most people do not experience any undesirable side effects; however some individuals develop gastrointestinal discomfort, headaches, or dizziness. These side effects usually resolve quickly, without intervention.

**Pine Bark Extract Reduces Hyperactivity and Lengthens the Attention Span**

Pine bark extract from the French maritime pine**,** Pinus pinaster, is a rich source of plant compounds that aid the health of your entire body. This is significant if you have a diagnosis of ADHD because experts do not really know what causes ADHD. Current research indicates that many mechanisms may precipitate its development. ADHD may be linked with allergies, impaired nutrient absorption in the intestines, exposure to toxins, or changes in circulation. Since pine bark extract supports the health of your entire body, it may reduce symptoms of ADHD via many routes and mechanisms. It improves oxygenation of many tissues, including your brain. Enhanced oxygenation makes your brain work at an optimal level.

A clinical trial (Maimoona A., et al. 2011) demonstrated that pine bark extract reduced DNA damage, diminished hyperactive behaviors, and increased attention spans among children who had ADHD. The study was conducted over a four-week period. The benefits were more pronounced in boys than with girls. Pine bark extract reduced adrenaline levels, which resulted in lowered levels of stress, and the children experienced improved visual motor coordination.

**Soothing Herbs Promote Relaxation**

Herbs such as chamomile, lemon balm, oat straw, and linden may reduce symptoms of ADHD. You may enjoy them as teas. All of these herbs are mild flavored. Pour one cup of boiling water over one teaspoon of dried herb to make a tea. Place a cover over the tea. Let the tea sit for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, strain out the herb and drink the tea. The usual adult dose is three to four cups daily. If you are administering the tea to children, give children between four and eight years of age one tablespoon of the tea three times daily. Children between eight and twelve may have two tablespoons of the tea three or four times each day. You may make herbal popsicles or

give children baths made with these herbs and obtain similar results.

**Herbs and ADHD**

Herbal remedies make excellent supportive therapies for ADHD. Because ADHD is a complex condition, multiple strategies must be employed. A healthy diet, stress reduction, exercise, management of the environment, and social relationships all impact how well ADHD is managed. Use herbs as an additional tool that leads to success. I recommend the use of organic herbs only when they are being used as a remedy for ADHD.

**References**

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