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Omega-3, -6 combination shows promise for inattention and cooperation in ADHD kids

By Stephen Daniells, 25-Jul-2012

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A combined supplement of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids may improve measures of inattention, impulsiveness, and cooperation in children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), suggests new data.

Parents and teachers discerned improvements in children with ADHD after six months of supplementation with the omega-combination, but no benefits were observed after three months, report scientists from the University of Colombo and the Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children in Sri Lanka.



"The combination of omega-3 and omega-6 was safe and effective in improving behavior and learning in the group that was studied," they wrote in the [Journal of Child Neurology](#).

"The current study is a pilot, and replication of the findings is required before we can advocate supplementation as a routine practice for children with behavior and learning difficulties that are refractory to standard managements."

Promising, but...

Commenting on the study's findings, Harry Rice, PhD, VP of scientific and regulatory affairs for the Global Organization for EPA and DHA Omega-3 (GOED), told [NutraIngredients-USA](#): *"While the results are promising, the experimental design falls short of what I would classify as rigorous."*

"For example, in AD(H)D studies, it's customary to use both a parent and a teacher rating scale for several reasons. Parent ratings are more likely to show improvement than teacher ratings. Also, similar ratings between the two scales increase the strength of the findings. Unfortunately, the current research used a parent rating scale only."

Omega-3s and ADHD

There has been some research published that indicates that a combination of omega-3s and omega-6s may have benefits for children with ADHD.

However, the totality of the evidence from randomized clinical trials is currently too limited to allow for any recommendations, concluded a recent review in the prestigious [Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews](#).

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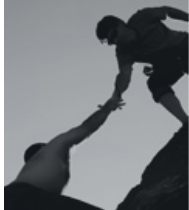
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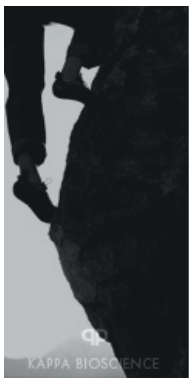
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New data

For the new study, the Sri Lanka-based scientists recruited 94 children aged between 6 and 12 with ADHD to participate in their study. All of the children were receiving methylphenidate medication (Ritalin) and standard behavior therapy for at least six months.

The children were randomly assigned to receive placebo or daily supplements of omega-3 (fish oil) and omega-6 (evening primrose oil). The ratio of fish oil to primrose oil was 1.6:1, with a daily omega-3 dose of 296.37 mg, and a daily of omega-6 of 180.75 mg. The researchers used the commercial Vegepa product.

While no significant improvements were observed after three months, a significant improvement was reported by parents and teachers after six months for inattention, impulsiveness, and cooperation. No improvements in distractibility were reported by parents and teachers.

"It is possible to infer from the results that the participants of the study may have benefitted further if treatment with omega-3 and omega-6 had been continued," said the researchers.

Source: *Journal of Child Neurology*

Volume 27, Number 6, Pages 747-753, doi:10.1177/0883073811435243

"Combined ω 3 and ω 6 Supplementation in Children With Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Refractory to Methylphenidate Treatment: A Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Study"

Authors: H. Perera, K.C. Jeewandara, S. Seneviratne, C. Guruge

Keywords: omega-3, omega-6, ADHD

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