



## Alternative Therapies

Many products sold in health food stores are labeled as natural. The term natural means that it is found in nature and made into a product that could be consumed. Natural does not mean safe. There are many “natural” compounds that are very poisonous including hemlock and some mushrooms. You must be careful, natural does not mean safe.

The basis of all medications is from nature and the compounds that nature makes. Penicillin and digitalis are the two most common medications that are used today that come from nature. Medicines are controlled by the FDA (Food & Drug Administration), proven to be safe and regulated so that what is given to you is actually what the label says. Nothing from the health food store is regulated by the FDA. Essentially someone could sell you anything in a bottle and tell you that it could do whatever they wish to tell you and no one can say they cannot do this. If using supplements, be very careful.

Many herbs and “natural” supplements are chemical compounds that may interfere with other medications that you take. Just like grapefruit may interfere with some medicines you take. Again, if you use supplements please be careful.

### Vitamins and Supplements

Many people will take extra doses or higher doses of **Vitamin A, B, or C** for behavior problems with children. There are no scientific studies to support this approach to behavior problems in children. **Magnesium** also has been said to improve behavior and attention in children; again there are no scientific studies to support this. Though Vitamin C and Magnesium are very safe, one could take too much of Vitamin A or B and possibly have side effects.

### Diets

- **Sugar and preservatives** have been widely studied in the past for ADHD. The diet was called the Feingold Diet, but there has not been one scientific study to show that it did anything for the symptoms of ADHD. Though sugar might increase activity slightly after ingestion, a sugar free diet will never treat ADHD.
- **Cascin Free and Gluten Free Diets** have been recommended for Autism. Many people report improvement with certain aspects of their child’s behavior. There is not much scientific evidence that it helps greatly. There might be some risk for the development of rickets because of the loss of calcium with this diet so one needs to make sure the child gets calcium from somewhere. There is also a risk of low iron and poor weight gain with this diet. One should see a nutritionist if you plan to use this type of diet for a period of time.



- **Anti-Yeast Medicines and Diets** - there is no data to support that yeast has anything to do with behavior in children. Using medications to decrease yeast might lower one's immune system. The medications can cause liver toxicity as well. There is no data to support that any diet low in carbohydrate will decrease the amount of yeast one has in their system.

## Herbs

- **Blue-Green Algae** are a source of vitamins and several Amino Acids. Amino Acids are the building blocks of proteins in our body. It is believed that these are healthy for one. However, if you eat a balanced diet you should not have to worry about not having enough Amino Acids.
- **Ephedra** also known as Ma Huang. Is the "natural ecstasy." It is also a psycho stimulant. It is very potent and can easily be taken in excess. Overdoses have been associated with sudden deaths and psychosis. This is not safe, but often is included in Natural ADD medicines.
- **Evening Primrose Oil** has many different long chain fatty acids and is used because of Omega 3 Fatty Acids it contains. It is felt to be safer than most herbs used for behavior.
- **Guarana** is from the Brazilian cocoa plant and is a natural psycho stimulant. Its mechanism of action is unclear but seems to work similar to Ritalin. It has multiple medication interactions. Other names might be Paullinia, Pallinia Capana or Pallinia Sortilis.
- **Ginkgo** increases one's blood flow throughout the body. It will increase mental ability, attention and energy, increasing one's blood flow might be safe for most of us, but there are those that could have a bad effect. One should not try this without talking to your physician.
- **Kava Kava** is an anti-anxiety herb. It is a central nervous system depressant. It has been linked to depression and increased suicide thoughts.<sup>100</sup>
- **Lemon Balm**, often sold as "Melissa" is also a sedative. It is sold as an ADHD Herb. It only sedates, it does not improve focus or attention. It should be reserved for sleep only.
- **Melatonin** is a hormone that regulates sleep patterns, especially the circadian rhythm. It appears to be safe and effective for sleep. The dose for children is 2 - 3 mg at bedtime. It takes 2 - 3 weeks to be effective. It is not a sedative.
- **Panax Ginseng or the "Root of Heaven"** is a psycho stimulant. It increases physical performance and concentration. It also is thought to improve one's sex drive. It also interferes with many medications.
- **Pycnogeols** have been used for ADHD in the past. There is not specific evidence that it works at all. It may be an antioxidant; however there is a small amount of cyanide in it so there is toxic potential if taken in large doses.
- **St. John's Wart** is a compound similar to Prozac and is used for depression. There are many drug interactions with this agent. It has been shown to be effective for some people; however the dosage is not well worked out.
- **Valerian** is a naturally occurring sedative. It will not help one's attention but possibly decrease hyperactivity by sedating your child. It would be best used for sleep.
- **Yerbe Mate** is a natural compound that is caffeine like in properties. Like caffeine it increases one's alertness, but has many gastro intestinal side effects. It can excite and cause headaches as well.



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## Chelation

Chelating has been recommended for children with Autism. Chelating is a process where a heavy metal is removed from the body. It is used if one becomes lead toxic. The premise is that Mercury poisoning causes Autism and one has the Mercury chelated from their body. If there was proof that this was true, the medical profession would offer chelating. There is just no proof that Mercury has anything to do with Autism.

## Aroma Therapy

Aromatherapy might be the safest of all the alternative therapies offered. The pineal gland in the brain is stimulated by certain smells and there is response to these aromas. Below you will find some common aromas and what conditions they might help.

- **Citrus:** Skin Problems, Apathy, Irritability and Depression, Insomnia.
- **Eucalyptus:** Aches & Pains, Asthma, Congestion, Arthritis, Headaches.
- **Geranium:** Nervous Tension, Anxiety, Sore Throat, Skin Problems.
- **Jasmine:** Depression, Nervous Anxiety, Exhaustion, Stress.
- **Lavender:** Sleep, Depression, Stress, Headaches, Skin Problems.
- **Lemon:** Depression, indigestion, Arthritis, Asthma.
- **Peppermint:** Muscle Fatigue, Bad Breath, Indigestion.
- **Rosemary:** Muscle Fatigue, Colds and Congestion, Aches and Pains.
- **Sage:** Depression, Anxiety, Muscular Aches.
- **Sandalwood:** Depression, Insomnia, Nervous Tension, Stress, Congestion.

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