

ADHD medication alone has no impact on learning, study

A study has shown that medication alone has no detectable impact on how much children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) learn in the classroom.



Source: Supplied. Health and wellness expert, Vanessa Ascencao.

The [study](#), a first of its kind, conducted by Florida International University (FIU), evaluated 173 children with ADHD and related behavioural, emotional and learning challenges between the ages of seven and 12 and found that children learned the same amount whether they were taking medication or the placebo.

While medication did not improve learning, the study showed that medication helped children complete more seatwork, improved classroom behaviour, and slightly improved test scores but not enough to boost most children's grades.

"Medicating our children doesn't solve the problem - it only takes away the symptoms temporarily. Instead, families should focus on behavioural interventions first and add medication only if needed," said Pelham, an ADHD research and treatment pioneer.

ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders affecting around two to 16% of school-aged children, according to the *South African Journal of Psychiatry*. It is estimated that at least 20 to 60% of symptoms persist into adulthood.

Compared to their peers, children with ADHD exhibit more off-task classroom behaviour, receive lower grades, and obtain lower scores on tests. They are also more likely to receive special education services, be retained for a grade or drop out before graduating.

The gut-brain axis

Health and wellness expert, Vanessa Ascencao said in addition to behavioural therapy, a healthy nutritious diet and high-quality supplements may play an important role in managing ADHD symptoms in young children, adolescents and adults, and may provide an integrative approach.

Studies show that the gut microbiome plays an important role in the gut-brain axis and that dysbiosis may contribute to several neurodevelopmental disorders including autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and ADHD.

Exposure to heavy metals is also one of the most reported environmental factors implicated in ADHD.

“Eliminate foods such as wheat, dairy and gluten. Eat a prebiotic-rich diet to improve gut health. Reduce heavy metal neurotoxicity by increasing intake of fruits and vegetables, eat lots of healthy fats and try high-quality supplements such as nature-based Marcus Rohrer Spirulina which contains over 100 nutrients and minerals and naturally occurring iron-rich water, Spatone,” said Ascencao.

A study has shown that low iron is prevalent in over 85% of children with ADHD. Iron is essential for brain health and affects the production of dopamine which can influence attention, behaviour and mood,” added Ascencao.

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