



MAXIMISING NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

If your child is taking medication to support their ADHD symptoms, they may experience a loss of appetite. To help your child get enough nutrition to grow and develop, try the following tips:

1

Make every mouthful count.

Include high-protein, high-energy foods like full fat dairy, nut pastes, eggs and lentils, or offer an oral nutritional supplement (ONS) when they are hungry. A powdered ONS can be mixed into food or drinks to boost the nutritional value of food without increasing its overall volume.



2

Listen to internal cues.

Work with your child to understand their appetite cues so you can maximise food intake when they feel most hungry. A hunger and fullness chart can be a useful tool to support your child to show you how hungry or full they feel.



Offer extra nutrition when your child's appetite is greatest.

This often occurs in the mornings when your child's medication has not yet taken effect or later at night when it starts to wear off.

4. Try a 'wiggle' break during meals.

To help your child focus their attention at mealtimes, add in a 'wiggle' break half-way through, like ten star jumps or wall push ups. Keep mealtimes calm and free from distractions such as screens.

5. Focus on bone health.

Medications for ADHD can impair bone health, so help your child get enough calcium and vitamin D from food or supplements. Include two to three serves of dairy or calcium rich foods such as fortified milk-alternatives, fish with bones or tofu each day. Sunlight, eggs and oily fish such as salmon are the best sources of vitamin D.



6

Develop a mealtime routine.

Children with ADHD feel safe with structure, when they know what is coming next. A set mealtime routine will help your child feel calm and organised, maximising their attention and enjoyment of mealtimes.