

Got ADHD ? Walk it out !

■ by Melinda Hammond, PsyD, LCPC



Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) seems to be all-too-common among children and teens. While therapy and medication are still the best treatment options we have, a new way to address attention and behavioral problems is gathering steam.

Study after study has shown that daily exercise can help combat the effects of ADHD and even some behavior problems. Regular exercise can even improve mood. Even better, some schools have found that the kids who exercise regularly (at least 4-5 times a week for at least 20 minutes) have higher reading and math scores than those who do not exercise.

Want to try it? You or your child should:

- **Plan to exercise before you have to work.** For kids, this may mean before school. Some districts offer “zero hour” P.E. – this can be a great option! Ideally, exercise should take place 1-2 hours before a student’s worst subject, or an adult’s most difficult part of the day.
- **Raise your heartrate.** You’re looking for at least 20 minutes of raised heartrate (155-200 beats per minute). Depending on your level of fitness, this can be a brisk walk or run.
- **Have FUN.** If running or walking isn’t your thing, try dancing, swimming, biking or rollerblading. If you don’t like it, it will be hard to make it into a habit.
- **Go outside.** Obviously, this is hard in the winter, but getting some sunlight can help re-focus your body’s sleep cycle, raise levels of vitamin D, and improve your mood. If you can’t be outside, consider a “happy light.”
- **Make it a habit.** It takes at least 2 weeks of exercise to start seeing results, so don’t give up!

Exercise alone may not replace treatment or medication, but it can be a great addition! In fact, the whole family can get involved, even those without ADHD. So get out and exercise! ■



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