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ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

By 6 years old, Jason had been labeled with attention deficit disorder. By 8 he was having trouble in school both academically and socially. The other kids didn't understand his overly aggressive behavior and were irritated by his repeated outbursts. Teachers were frustrated by his lack of concentration and his inability to stay on task. At home, impulsive and aggressive behavior resulted in many sibling squabbles and his parents were at their wits end as to how to get through to their child. The school was pressuring Jason's parents to pursue drug therapy for their son. His parents thought 'we aren't comfortable with giving our child drugs to suppress his behavior, but we have to do something to help him function better.'

That was the point that they sought naturopathic medical care. Naturopathic doctors are primary care physicians with full medical training plus extensive expertise in natural medicines. The first step in Jason's treatment was a thorough evaluation of his mental, emotional and physical state. Next, the doctor looked carefully at his medical history to assess whether there were events that could have contributed to creating an imbalance in Jason's body that might cause behavioral problems. Then a program was embarked upon to remove any underlying causes of those problems. A homeopathic remedy was given, which immediately resulted in fewer angry outbursts and a more mature approach to problem solving. Jason was then tested for food allergies, which in his case were numerous. His parents observed marked behavioral improvements within weeks of avoiding these specific foods. Any slips ups (which the doctor called "food experiments") increased Jason's irritability and impulsivity dramatically. Other nutritional supplements were recommended and a program was done to correct a dangerous intestinal imbalance caused by repeated use of antibiotics. Within 3 months of treatment, Jason's parents felt that they had their son back and the teachers were reporting steady improvements. Not only were his parents thrilled with Jason's turn around, they felt good that they had dealt with the underlying causes of their child's problems without having to use drugs to suppress those problems.

Children are being treated with drugs for what we label attention deficit disorder at an alarming rate. The number of children on drugs for ADHD has increased dramatically.. In some schools, 30% of the boys are on Ritalin-type drugs. As Jason's case illustrates, naturopathic doctors attempt to address the cause of problems in a holistic manner. Potential physical factors that can contribute to ADD are:

- Food allergies – finding and eliminating an individual's food allergies substantially helps a significant percentage of children with ADD. These kids very often have a history of repeated ear infections, tonsillitis and other allergic symptoms.
- Yeast overgrowth from repeated use of antibiotics – intestinal yeast creates 80 known toxins, including alcohol, which can impair mental functioning.
- Blood sugar imbalances - low blood sugar (ironically the result of high sugar diets) can cause symptoms identical to those we label ADHD.
- Heavy metal toxicity – mercury fillings, lead exposure and more can affect cognitive functioning
- Nutritional deficiencies – essential fatty acids, iron and other minerals are often lacking

Many children have received long-term benefits from addressing these and other issues under the care of naturopathic physicians. Each child deserves to be treated as an individual and given the chance to improve their health in a real and lasting way.

For more information on attention deficit disorder or naturopathic pediatric care, contact Dr. Deidre Macdonald at 897-0235.

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