

Table evaluating the merits and disadvantages of types of dietary advice for ADHD and other neuro-developmental disorders

	Zinc and iron rich foods and / or supplements	Food additives exclusion	Exclusion of natural substances that may cause intolerance	Omega 3 rich diet or capsules	Diet rich in fruit & vegetables	Reduce fatty & sugary foods
Is there evidence that it can be effective?	Yes – quite good evidence	Yes – quite good evidence	Not much – mostly anecdotal. Varies very strongly between individuals	Some good quality evidence	Indirect – antioxidants needed to prevent lipid peroxidation that has been reported in ADHD & ASD	Some in favour of low G.I diet, regular meals, and attention
Is it palatable?	Yes, but not for all children	Yes	Not always	Often not popular	Quite often but not always	Yes
Is it safe?	Dietary sources: Yes Supplements: Usually safe but best combined with blood tests and advice on dosage	Yes	Not always Depends on rest of diet. Exclusion of whole food groups best done under supervision	Dietary sources: Yes up to 2 portions a week for girls, 4 for boys Supplements: Max 1000 mg per day EPA	Yes (except where foods introduced produce intolerance)	Yes
How well does it fit with general healthy eating guidelines?	Quite well – More than 3 portions a week can increase cancer risk	Very well	This is possible – supervision will ensure this	Very well	Very well	Very well
Is it practical in our food culture?	Yes	Fairly practical: Substitute foods available	Often difficult for things like wheat and milk	Yes	Yes	Can be difficult in current food culture
Will it make the diet deficient?	No	Never	Potentially yes (vitamins from F&V, fibre from wheat and calcium from milk)	No	No	No
Recommendation	Make specific information sheet available	Make specific information sheet available	Include caution in “general” diet and ADHD overview info sheet	Make specific information sheet available	Include in “general” diet and ADHD overview information sheet	Include in “general” diet and ADHD overview info sheet