

# Diet and Dyslexia

## Fish oils

There is some evidence that fish oil supplements may help children with dyslexia, dyspraxia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Fish oils are a type of fatty acid - they are essential for health, especially brain health. Most western diets are now deficient in fatty acids due to us not eating enough oily fish and certain vegetables.

A controlled trial was carried out in 2002 with Durham County Council Education Authority and Dr Alex Richardson of the Dyslexia Research Trust to see if children responded to an increase of fish oils in their diet. The children had dyslexia, dyspraxia or Attention Deficit Disorder.

The children were given the product Eye-Q, which is a capsule containing fatty acids, for six months. The dosage was six 500mg capsules daily, given in 3 doses. It was found that 40% of children showed improvement in their concentration and learning, with reading age increases of between 18 months and four years in some children.

This trial does seem to support the theory that fish oils can help some children with dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD. It can take 12 weeks for cell-turnover to take place in the brain, so be patient if you try this.

The trial can be found on: [www.durhamtrial.org](http://www.durhamtrial.org)

## Other dietary factors

All children need food which will give them energy throughout the day.

Dyslexic children often *have to work much harder* than their non-dyslexic peers to achieve the same amount of progress, so they need foods that will provide sustained energy. This means *avoiding sugary/junk food* that raises energy levels fast, followed by a rapid fall, which can affect learning. A good breakfast is important.

The following are suggestions – the main aim is to reduce the amount of sugar, refined carbohydrates and processed ready-meals, but to increase the amount of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains in the diet. Children, like adults, should have 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, in total. A drink of *fresh* fruit juice counts as one portion.

**Breakfast** - Wholegrain cereals without sugar coatings, milk, yoghurt, eggs, fruit, or fruit juice.

**Packed lunches** – wholemeal bread for sandwiches, home made pasta salads, fruit, small tomatoes, carrot sticks, dried fruit, water instead of sugary drinks.

Snacks – fresh fruit, dried fruit, yoghurt, cheese, savoury sandwiches - avoid sweets, biscuits, crisps and sugary drinks.