

## Helping Children Find Focus

### Massage Calms ADHD Kids

Cathy Ulrich

Imagine lying on a massage table. As your massage therapist sets to work, you feel your body relax. Your muscles soften, your nervous system calms. Now, imagine how you feel when the massage is over--relaxed, alert, calm, and content.

Anyone who has gotten a massage understands the many benefits that it offers. Massage is usually reserved for adults--or sometimes infants--but what about massage for kids and adolescents? If massage helps calm the body and improve alertness, how might it help kids with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)? Can children and teenagers who can't sit still benefit from massage?

the rate of diagnosis for girls has been rising as well, and girls who are diagnosed have the same level of impairment as boys.

Kids with ADHD show difficulty holding attention and display impulsive behaviors and overactivity levels beyond what might be expected for their age group. They typically show poorer academic performance, have difficulty in social settings, and can't adapt as well emotionally as kids without ADHD. Studies show that a diagnosis of ADHD puts kids at higher risk for delinquent behaviors and substance abuse. Other diagnoses such as learning disabilities, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders are often seen in the same children.



Many kids with ADHD who receive massage say they are happier and more confident.

### Understanding ADHD

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is rapidly rising as the most common psychiatric diagnostic label for children. Anywhere from 3-7 percent of all school-age children and adolescents may have it, and it is one of the primary causes of behavioral problems in general pediatric settings. Nine boys are diagnosed with ADHD for every girl, but

### Medical Treatments

Now a household name, the drug Ritalin is the most common medication prescribed for children diagnosed with ADHD. In fact, it's the most common drug prescribed for any childhood disorder. It's been estimated that more

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*We all need  
time to sit and  
rest, a place to  
relax and take  
a breath.*

-M. Albrechtsen

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than five million school-age children take Ritalin annually.

Known to stimulate areas of the brain associated with attention, arousal, and inhibition, Ritalin seems to help improve ADHD symptoms in about 75 percent of cases, but its effects last only as long as it's taken, and it does produce side-effects. Nervousness, headaches, sleeplessness, and rapid heart rate are sometimes seen with its use, and overdose can produce severe effects such as agitation, hallucinations, high blood pressure, seizures, heart arrhythmias, and psychosis. In addition, studies are only now being conducted on long-term effects.

Ritalin, as well as other psychostimulant drugs, can be effective in improving attention span and modifying behaviors associated with ADHD, but kids need to be monitored carefully for side effects and appropriate dosage.

## Massage for ADHD

Two recent studies conducted by the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami reported that regular massage therapy can be an effective treatment for kids with ADHD. One study found adolescent boys who received ten 15-minute daily massages were observed by their teachers to be more focused in their schoolwork, and they fidgeted less. In addition, the children rated themselves as happier than those who participated in a relaxation therapy program.

Another study involved kids aged 7-18, 20 percent of whom were girls. Each subject received a 20-minute massage twice a week. They showed immediate improvement in their moods and longer-term behavioral improvement in the classroom. They also reported feeling happier and their teachers found them to be more attentive.

In adult studies, massage has been shown to reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol, helping to mitigate the active fight-or-flight response. Massage also helps improve math computation performance and raises alertness levels, as measured on electroencephalograms (EEGs). Finally, massage decreases depression and increases mental focus. The same effects are seen in children and teenagers with ADHD.

## The Details

Incorporating professional massage into your child's routine may help him to develop an age-appropriate ability to focus, a calmer disposition, and even increased confidence. Studies report that two 20-minute massages a week are enough to show significant improvement in ADHD children. Because these kids have trouble staying still for prolonged periods, they better tolerate shorter, more frequent massages.

For massage on children with ADHD, a practitioner generally uses simple, moderate-pressure strokes to the child's head/neck, arms, torso, legs, and back. Dividing time between these areas--say four minutes each--will address the full body and is enough to get the desired effect. Most kids do fine fully clothed.

A comfortable bed, chair, or table in a quiet room is best. For parents seeking

skilled bodywork for their kids, chair massage is a great choice, done with the child fully clothed and for about 20-30 minutes at a time.

In addition, supplementing with home massages between professional sessions can also be useful. Talk to your massage therapist about private massage lessons for you. She can teach you simple, effective techniques to use on your child when frequent visits to the massage therapist may not be practical.

By adding massage to your child's routine, you're giving him much needed physical contact and helping to calm his nervous system, which will pay dividends in his ability to do school work, interact with peers and teachers, and be happier in general. And if you're massaging your child yourself, you'll create the opportunity for a stronger emotional bond between the two of you.



Bodywork helps children with ADHD succeed in the classroom, boosting self-esteem.

# A Walking Workout

## Have Fun While Burning More Calories

Imagine the lone hiker, backpack laden with sleeping bag and bedroll, wielding a well-worn walking stick as she climbs the side of a snow-covered mountain. For centuries, trekkers have used walking sticks, partly as a defense against attacking wildlife, partly to aid in balance, and partly as support on long, arduous climbs. But in recent years, many hikers have replaced the single wooden walking stick with hiking poles.

Held in both hands and used to distribute weight more evenly through the four limbs, wilderness hikers have found poles invaluable for safety, efficiency, and comfort on long hikes. What wilderness hikers have known for some time now is that walking poles are a great way to relieve pressure on knees, ankles, and the back. They encourage better posture and provide a total body workout by engaging the upper body.

Now, hiking poles are showing up in urban areas as fitness walkers discover the benefits they provide. Nordic walking--similar in technique to cross-

country skiing--is a great way to get a whole body workout, increase oxygen consumption, and burn more calories than regular walking or even speed walking. This total body workout burns 40 percent more calories and consumes 25 percent more oxygen. Poles can be purchased at most outdoor sporting stores, along with rubber tips for use on paved paths.

### TECHNIQUE

Adjust your poles to approximately 70 percent of your height and loosely secure the straps around your wrists. Hold the poles at an angle behind you so they propel you forward with a slight bend at the elbow. Use an opposite hand-and-heel motion as you walk--right heel strikes as left pole tip contacts the ground. And you're on your way! Don't be shy with your poles. Remember: You're burning 40 percent more calories.

For more information, visit [www.walking.about.com/od/nordicwalking/index.htm](http://www.walking.about.com/od/nordicwalking/index.htm).



**Add walking poles, and burn more calories.**

# Shea Butter

## For Your Complexion and More

*Shelley Burns, N.D.*

Shea butter comes from the nut of the shea tree (pronounced shay) found in the tropics of Africa, primarily West Africa. It offers many benefits as a topical moisturizer for skin and hair, and improves other skin problems and appearance.

As well as providing relief from minor dermatological conditions like eczema, lesser burns, and acne, shea butter can be used as a natural sunscreen and for stretch-mark prevention during pregnancy. Other benefits include the evening out of skin tone, reducing blemishes, and restoring skin elasticity.

Shea butter easily penetrates the skin, allowing skin to breathe without clogging pores. It contains high

concentrations of linoleic acid, which provide skin protection at a cellular level, as well as vitamins A, E, and F, which protect against premature wrinkles. Vitamin F in shea butter also soothes rough, dry, or chapped skin.

Healing though it may be, shea butter undergoes a rigorous path in its journey from overseas to the faces and bodies of your clients. The fruit from the shea tree is cultivated, cracked, grilled, pounded, and boiled. The shea butter is then scooped out of the nut and left to cool.

Properties of shea butter include unsaponifiables--substances that cannot decompose into acids, salts, or alcohol. For that reason, shea butter is extremely

absorbable, even more so than soybean and avocado oils.

There are three types of shea butter extraction and just two of the three end products of these extractions should be used. Unrefined shea butter in its pure form is yellow. Refined shea butter is processed but still contains many of its natural components. Either is fine to use. Highly refined shea butter may well have lost its healing properties and can include such solvents as hexane, which may cause nerve damage. It is pure white and should be avoided. Another note of caution: shea butter is not recommended for people with nut and latex allergies, and some experts also discourage its use by people with chocolate allergies.

*Holding on to  
anger is like  
grasping a hot  
coal with the  
intent of  
throwing it at  
someone else;  
you're the one  
who gets burned.*  
-Buddha

Spring! The time of rebirth and firsts. The first buds on the trees. The first robin in the yard. The first flowers popping up with bright happy faces. It has been a long cold winter, but these first rites of spring seem to bring a freshness to our outlook on life, a lightness to our step and renewed vitality to our winter weary spirit. The first days of warm weather also lends itself to overdoing it with spring cleaning projects and yard work. Have a massage scheduled for the completion of those spring projects to help work out any sore and tight muscle tension that may come about.

Quiet Moments offers several options for relief from muscle discomfort, such as hot stone massage, far infrared heat lamp treatments, even salt scrubs to help exfoliate dry skin.

A new treatment offered at Quiet Moments is lymphatic face/neck massage, to help alleviate puffy eyes, headaches and sinus problems, as well as helping to rejuvenate dull lifeless skin.

To learn more about these treatments go to [www.quietmomentsmassagetherapy.com](http://www.quietmomentsmassagetherapy.com) and click on therapies, or call (816)260-3747 to schedule an appointment.

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