

## Ritalin Side Effects Now Include Sudden Death

After years of speculation and rare case reports, a recent FDA-funded study by The National Institute of Mental Health claims that drugs such as Ritalin - widely used to treat Attention Deficit Disorder in children - increase the risk of sudden death by five hundred percent among children and teens.

"Drugs are not the answer," said Etta Brown, a licensed educational psychologist, veteran social worker and author of Learning Disabilities, Understanding the Problem and Managing the Challenges from Langdon Street Press ([www.understandingld.com](http://www.understandingld.com)). "Doctors and pharmaceutical companies are quick to tell parents there is a pill that will fix their kids, but it's a false bill of goods. In many cases, these drugs - like Ritalin - will serve only to dull their kids' senses and create health risks the parents could never have imagined."

The irony of Ritalin, Brown added, is that it actually damages the neural connections needed for learning. While it may calm a hyper-active child, so that he is less of a problem in the classroom and can sit still for longer periods of time, it does not create the ability to learn.

"Another well-documented side effect of Ritalin is that it may cause a permanent tic of the face, head and neck," Brown said. "There is a long fifty-year history of false advertising by drug companies that sell drugs with known side effects that are more damaging to the developing nervous system of children than the condition they are designed to treat."

Between two to 18 percent of American children are thought to be affected by ADHD, and Ritalin remains one of the most prescribed drugs for the behavioral disorder. This suggests that the medical approach to poorly nourished children who aren't getting enough exercise is to dose them with a drug that is known to interfere with the development of their brains, cause permanent ticing of the face, head and neck, and increase the likelihood of sudden death by 500 percent. And the FDA is not looking.

"As with ADHD, the incidence of learning disabilities has also been growing at a rate of 10-20 percent every 10 years since WWII," said Brown. "The difference between a learning disability and attention deficit disorder, she says, is the professional who diagnoses it. The Department of Education refers to the condition as a learning disability, and the American Psychological Association looking at the same set of symptoms labels them Attention Deficit Disorder. Add these two percentages together and 12 to 38 percent of the nation's children have learning problems."

Kids live in a world full of toxins, limited exercise, a lack of sleep, fast foods, and loads of time alone caused by the need for parents to work two jobs to make ends meet. The consequence is severe allergies to a toxic environment, obesity from a lack of exercise, an inability to learn due to a lack of sufficient nutrients to keep the brain functioning properly, and limited emotional security in 38 percent of our children.

Brown says that proper diet, exercise and adequate sleep are the key to helping a child overcome learning disabilities and improve his ability to attend.

"There is no easy solution, no pill, no magic wand, or special education program that is going to make a child a better learner," Brown said. "Learning disabilities and ADHD are not the fault of the children, or failure of the school. But, the schools have to teach each child that comes to them. "

Learning disabilities should become as much a concern for public health as it is for education, according to Brown.

"Instead of medicating kids into oblivion because they can't sit still, parents should be encouraged to cut the sodas and junk food, provide opportunities for their kids to exercise, ensure they get 6 to 8 hours of sleep each night, and take the time to interact with them on occasion," she added. "There is no substitute for parenting, and there is no replacement for proper diet, exercise and good sleep habits to enhance a child's readiness for learning."

## About the Author

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