



**Nurture Pods**  
EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

# NewsPod

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## Editorial Team

Contributors: Alexandra, Alex Liau

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## “You have Autism”

### Introducing your child to the diagnosis

After learning about your child’s autism diagnosis, a common dilemma parents face revolves around the ‘who, what, when, where’ of telling your child about his or her diagnosis. Talking about the diagnosis with your child is crucial and is a step neither to be taken lightly nor without any forethought. This article will focus on some factors and points to consider when introducing the diagnosis to your child, through the 4 aspects mentioned above.

**Who** explains the diagnosis to your child could make a difference in your child’s reaction to the diagnosis. Selecting the best person to introduce the diagnosis depends on your child. At times, it can be hard for someone with autism to seek support and find comfort in the bearer of confusing or troubling news. As such, for some families, they opt to let a professional tell their child as this leaves the support and comfort role to the parents or close family members – hence family members are seen by the child as more supportive. Other times, the child may feel safer if close family members told him or her.



**When** and **where** are two important factors you should consider. There is no one universal correct time to tell your child about the diagnosis. The 'correct' time may differ from child to child. When to tell your child may depend on how ready you think he or she is for this information. Determining factors of readiness may include your child's personality, level of social awareness and abilities. Other indicators of 'when' may be questions from your child such as: "Why am I different from others?" or "What is wrong with me?". When you do decide to tell your child, choose a time when your child is in a calm mood, and a place your child finds safe and comforting.

Be prepared and think about **what** to tell your child about the diagnosis. For starters, you might want to factor in your child's level of understanding. This may be a gauge for how much information to provide and how in depth your explanation should be, such that your child can understand the diagnosis easily. Be ready to answer questions you may have by reading up on autism. But if you are unsure what you should tell your child, you could always seek advice from professionals.



Having an action plan (e.g. interventions your child will undergo) ready may help reduce feelings of uncertainty. At Nurture Pods, after bringing in your child for an evaluation, our experts will craft an individualized intervention program catered to your child's needs. For example, if your child is on track to transition to a mainstream school, our structured teaching and environment classes at our Centre for Child Development and Early Intervention will develop skills in literacy, language and mathematics (just to name a few) according to your child's level.

## Omega-3s and their potential benefits for children with ADHD



Science and research have long praised the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids. Fatty acids are vital to our brain's function and structure, and the most important of the fatty acids is omega-3. Two of the most talked about omega-3s is DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) as both have crucial roles with regards to the brain. DHA plays a vital role in the development of the brain, and EPA is crucial for brain function.

A study found that children with ADHD tend to have lower concentrations of DHA and EPA which in turn, affects the brain's development and functioning - possibly resulting in more ADHD symptoms. Recent studies suggest that intake of DHA and EPA certain consumption levels may yield benefits for children with ADHD or ADHD-type symptoms.

A UK study found that children with ADHD and children with related behaviour and learning difficulties (such as dyspraxia and dyslexia) have lower amounts of DHA in their blood. Lower levels of DHA were associated with poorer reading ability and working memory performance. In this study, they showed that these children benefited from dietary DHA supplements; where behaviour problems, working memory and reading improved as the amount of DHA present in their blood increased. However, some researchers from an Oxford study did specify that though DHA supplementation may reduce ADHD-type behaviours for almost all children, DHA supplementation as an intervention for reading difficulties is best targeted at children whose reading is 'poorest' – poorest was qualified as being 2 years behind in reading level, in this Oxford study.

A Swedish study showed that 25% of children taking daily doses of omega-3 supplements experienced a significant decrease in ADHD symptoms after 3 months. After 6 months, about 50% showed better management of their ADHD symptoms.



Our daily intake of omega-3s usually comes from food such as fish, flaxseed, canola oil and some dairy products like yogurt. However, according to a US study, only a small amount DHA and EPA is contributed to our daily omega-3 intake from food (around 40mg for a child based US statistics).

Taking omega-3 supplements can thus increase the daily intake to the amount required to yield benefits. Some doctors recommend about 700-1000mg of omega-3s (containing essential fatty acids EPA and DHA at a 2:1 ratio) for children between the ages of 4 and 8, and 2000-2500mg for older children to see reductions in hyperactivity and impulsivity, and improvement in concentration.



Omega-3 supplements may come in liquid form (e.g. cod liver oil), capsules or chewable gummies. Be sure to check how much omega-3 fatty acids are present in the various forms as the amount tends to vary.

For example, chewable gummies tend to have a lot less omega-3s than capsules or liquid form. If your child dislikes liquid omega-3 supplements, you could try mixing it in with their favourite drinks such as juice or smoothies.

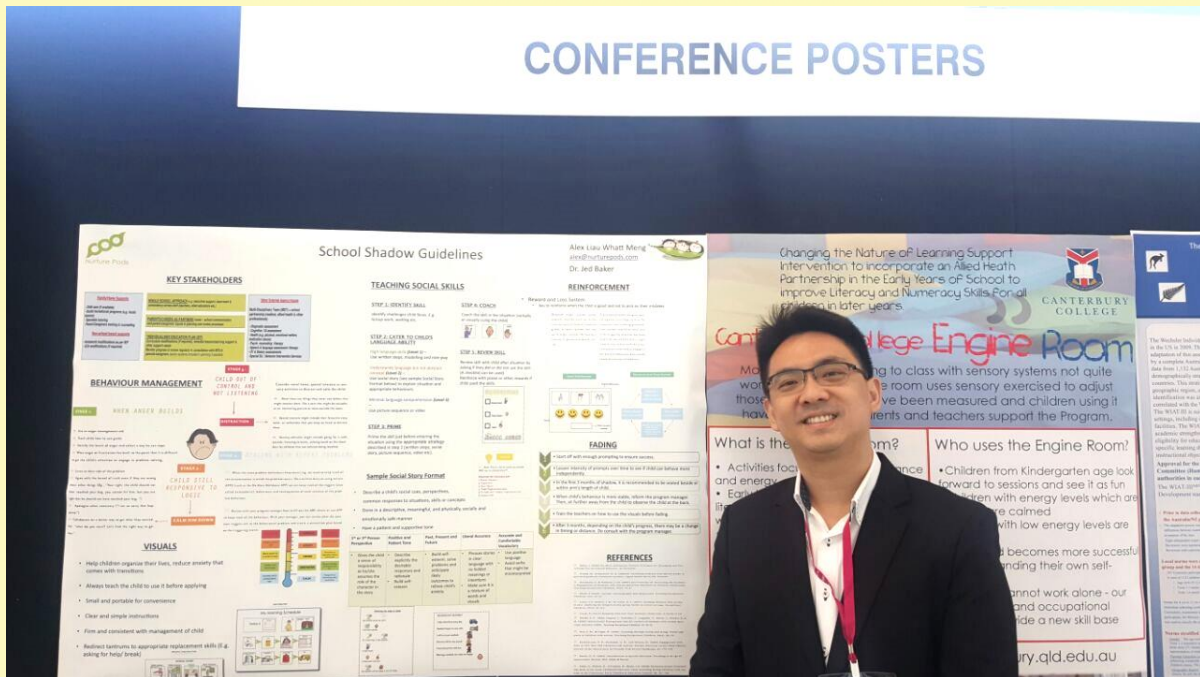
According to some doctors, improvement in some children with ADHD can be seen in just a few days, whereas some may only show improvement a few weeks or months down the road. So if you do decide to give your child omega-3 supplements, don't feel discouraged or give up too soon, remain patient and optimistic and perhaps you might see the benefits!

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# 2017 AASE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

## CONFERENCE POSTERS



**Nurture Pods Clinical Director, Alex at the conference**

Walk With Us to the Northern Territory in 2017. The Northern Territory Chapter of the Australian Association of Special Education hosted the 2017 AASE National Conference at the Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin Waterfront Precinct on Friday 7th and Saturday 8th April, 2017.

The Conference's theme, "Walk with Me" will focus on the journey a learner takes and the Conference Program will include four strands:  
Education: pre to post schooling  
Behaviour Social emotional  
Practical strategies - 'hands on practice'.

Nurture Pods published the world 1st guideline for school shadow support in mainstream schools with Dr Jed Baker.

He was being invited to Australia Association of Special Education to present the school shadow guideline book. This book is sold in the USA to schools who use it as a guide for para-professionals.



**Clinical Director Alex with our Social Skills Consultant, Ms Michelle Poh**