

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a childhood condition that often continues through adolescence and adulthood. There are three main types of ADHD: Hyperactive-impulsive, inattentive and combined hyperactive-impulsive and inattentive. Most children have a combined type of ADHD.

The Facts

- According to the National Institute of Mental Health, ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 5.2 million children 3-17 years of age have been diagnosed with ADHD.
- Boys are more likely to have ADHD than girls. The CDC estimates that 11.2 percent of boys ages 3-17 have been diagnosed, compared to 5.5 percent of girls the same age.

What to Watch For

Signs of inattentive behavior:

- Difficulty following instructions
- Difficulty focusing on tasks
- Losing things
- Forgetfulness
- Becoming easily distracted or having difficulty listening
- Lack of attention to detail, disorganization
- Failing to complete tasks such as homework or chores

Signs of hyperactive behavior:

- Excessive fidgeting
- Difficulty remaining seated
- Inappropriate behavior
- Excessive talking
- Always "on the go"
- Blurting out answers or interrupting frequently
- Trouble waiting his or her turn
- Interrupting or intruding on others

Determining if a child has ADHD requires a series of tests and information gathering by a health professional, including monitoring the child's behavior at school and home.

Treatment Options

While there is no cure for ADHD, medication, behavior intervention and other treatments are often used to manage ADHD. The best treatment plans combine several options.

The most common form of medication used to treat ADHD is a stimulant, which can have a calming effect on children. Medication can reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity, improve the ability to focus and improve physical coordination for children with ADHD.

As with all medications, there are some side effects. However, most are minor and can be eliminated over time. Commonly reported side effects include:

- Decreased appetite
- Sleep problems
- Anxiety
- Irritability

Regular exercise and a healthy diet that avoids foods high in sugar or caffeine may also be beneficial for those with ADHD.

How Parents and Other Caregivers Can Help

Be patient. Approximately nine out of every 10 children with ADHD respond to medications that help them manage their disorder, but medications should be monitored and may need to be altered over time as your child grows. It can take time for treatments to work and for your child to learn how to manage his or her symptoms.

Boost your child's self esteem. In addition to the symptoms of their disorder, children with ADHD may struggle with low self-esteem, troubled relationships and poor performance in school. Express your confidence in their abilities and celebrate their successes.



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