



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Children and Adolescents

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What is ADHD?

- ADHD is a common **treatable** childhood disorder characterized by the following symptoms:
 - a. Hyperactivity
 - b. Impulsivity
 - c. And/or inattention
- Children with ADHD may display one or more of these symptoms.
- These symptoms usually appear before the age of 12 and during the first years of childhood (ages four and five). They last for at least six months.
- ADHD symptoms negatively affect the child at school and home.
- Symptoms of ADHD are not part of a child's natural development.
- It is important to detect and diagnose these symptoms at an early age.

How common is ADHD?

- ADHD is quite common in children (five percent to ten percent).
- It is more frequent in boys than in girls.
- Sometimes ADHD continues into adulthood.

What causes ADHD?

- There is no single cause for ADHD.
- It is not caused by bad parenting or lack of discipline.
- It is usually a mix of biological and environmental factors. It seems to run in families, which means it might be hereditary.

What is hyperactivity?

A child who is hyperactive may:

- Move around constantly
- Touch or play with anything around
- Talk continuously
- Leave his/her seat and move around the room
- Shake feet or tap fingers
- Feel restless
- Need to be kept busy at all times

What is impulsivity?

A child who is impulsive may:

- Express things spontaneously without thinking first
- Show his/her emotions without restraints
- Fail to realize the consequences of his/her actions
- Find it difficult to stand in line or wait for his/her turn

What is inattention?

A child who is inattentive may:

- Find it difficult to organize and complete a task or activity
- Have difficulty learning something new or following instructions
- Forget to write down homework or bring a book home
- Become easily distracted
- Make careless mistakes
- Forget things

How is ADHD diagnosed?

The doctor or the psychologist diagnoses ADHD through:

- Interviews with the parents and the child whereby the psychologist asks about the child's behavior at home and school.
- Reports filled by the parents and teachers about the child's behavior and attention in class.
- Computerized cognitive tests to test the attention span (the psychologist might order these tests in some but not all cases).

What are the problems associated with ADHD?

The child or adolescent with ADHD might have other problems associated with this disorder, such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety disorder
- Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
- Conduct disorder
- Speech or hearing difficulties
- Difficulties in reading and writing

Can my child be treated for ADHD?

Yes. There are successful treatments that help in improving the symptoms of ADHD and reducing the academic, and social difficulties.

Treatment may include one or more of the following:

- Medication
- Psychotherapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Family support
- Educational support

How does ADHD affect children and adolescents if it was not treated?

- The child will feel down because of academic and social difficulties resulting from lack of attention.
- The child will find it difficult to establish and maintain friendships, which might lead to isolation and lack of self-confidence.
- The child will have academic difficulties and might not be able to continue his/her academic year.

School recommendations to help the child/adolescent with ADHD

1. Classroom arrangements

- Seat the child in the front row or in an area with minimal classroom traffic.
- Keep the child well-informed of all expected tasks through updating the classroom schedule.

2. Giving instructions

- Give instructions individually or within a small-group setting and make sure they are given one at a time.
- Give the child instructions at the beginning of each task and ask him/her to repeat them before starting the task.

3. Giving tasks

- Assign tasks that are short (divide longer tasks into smaller parts) and varied. Gradually, increase their length.

4. Giving breaks

- Provide periodic stretch breaks during extended lessons. These are periods of three to five minutes of physical movement which occur after every 15 to 20 minutes of cognitive effort.

5. Common instructions

- Bring the child back to the task at hand when he/she daydreams using a common signal between teachers and parents (such as a tap on the shoulder).

6. Encouragement

- Encourage the child to seek help from teachers or students when he/she does not understand an assignment.

Home recommendations to help the child/adolescent with ADHD

1. Establishing and maintaining a routine at home

- Set a specific time and place for lunch and dinner, playtime with siblings, sleeping, and homework.
- Establish clear and simple rules. Keep those rules handy for your child to see and remember them.
- Make sure your child has a quiet place to study without outside distractions or interruptions.

2. Communication

- Maintain eye-contact when giving instructions and let your child repeat the instructions.
- Write rules in a positive way.
For example, "Have lunch in the kitchen," instead of "Don't eat lunch in the living room."

3. Praising

- Be on the lookout for positive behavior and praise your child using statements such as, "Good for you; well done!"
- Be gentle but firm in reminding your child of your rules whenever he/she breaks them.

4. Short tasks

- Divide long tasks into smaller parts that can be completed at different times.
- Set specific time limits for each task and allow your child to check his/her progress with a watch.

5. Giving breaks

- Allow your child to take periodic stretch breaks. These are periods of three to five minutes of physical movement which occur after every 15 to 20 minutes of cognitive effort.

6. Encouragement

- Encourage your child to ask questions and monitor him/her while studying.

This educational material provides general information only. It does not constitute medical advice. Consult your health care provider to determine whether the information applies to you.