

A Family For Every Child Newsletter

Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder

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→ About ADHD

ADHD is defined as a problem with inattentiveness, over-activity, impulsiveness, or a combination, that is out of the normal range of the child's age and development, and interferes with their daily activities and lives. It is diagnosed in 3-5% of school age children, and is diagnosed more in boys than girls.

→ Symptoms

There are 3 types of ADHD, each with specific symptoms. The types are **inattention**, **hyperactivity-impulsivity**, or a **combination**. Symptoms must be present for at least 6 months, observable in at least two settings, and are not caused by another problem. Children with **inattention symptoms** have a hard time giving close attention to detail; difficulty in maintaining attention in play and other tasks; are easily distracted; don't seem to listen when spoken to directly; lose things; and are forgetful in daily activities. Children with **hyperactivity symptom**s squirm or fidget when seated; run about in inappropriate situations; have difficulty playing quietly; and always seem to be "on-the-go". Children with **impulsivity symptoms** blurt out answers before the question is finished; have difficulty awaiting their turn; and interrupt or intrude on others. For a child to be diagnosed with ADHD, the behaviors listed above must be so frequent and severe that they interrupt the child's daily life and activities.

→ Treatment.

The most common treatments for ADHD are **behavioral therapy** and **medication**. Psychostimulants like Ritalin are the most common medications used on children who are diagnosed with ADHD. If your child has a heart condition, it is important that you talk to your doctor before having them go on medication, as some of the medications have caused sudden death in children with heart problems. Setting specific therapy goals, limiting distractions at home, making sure the child gets enough sleep, and eats well-balanced meals with plenty of fiber and nutrients are all helpful. There is no cure for ADHD. Adults with ADHD are able to hold jobs and perform well in the workplace.

It is really important to keep in mind that to have you child diagnosed with ADHD, the behaviors must go **above and beyond what is expected of a child that age**. It must interfere with their daily lives and activities. In addition, it is very important to consider all treatment options if your child is diagnosed with ADHD. When placing your child on medication, make sure it is for the short term, as this has been found to be the most effective. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is a great resource for learning more about ADHD.