

# ADHD

## Understanding Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Almost all children have times when their behavior veers out of control. They may speed about in constant motion, make noise nonstop, refuse to wait their turn, and crash into everything around them. At other times they may drift as if in a daydream, failing to pay attention or finish what they start.

However, for some children, these kinds of behaviors are more than an occasional problem. Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), have behavior problems that are so frequent and severe that they interfere with their ability to live normal lives.

These children often have trouble getting along with siblings and other children at school, at home and in other settings. Those who have trouble paying attention usually have trouble learning. An impulsive nature may put them in actual physical danger. Because children with ADHD have difficulty controlling this behavior, they may be labeled "bad kids" or "space cadets."

ADHD is a condition of the brain that makes it difficult for children to control their behavior. It is one of the most common chronic conditions of childhood. It affects 4 percent to 12 percent of school-aged children. About three times more boys than girls are diagnosed with ADHD.

Left untreated, more severe forms of ADHD can lead to serious, lifelong problems such as poor grades in school, run-ins with the law, failed relationships, and the inability to keep a job.

But effective treatment is available. If your child has ADHD, your pediatrician can offer a long-term treatment plan to help your

child lead a happy and healthy life. As a parent, you have a very important role in this treatment.

The diagnosis of ADD/ADHD usually requires symptoms in more than one setting, and is usually not diagnosed until the child becomes school-aged. There are objective measures that your pediatrician will use to assess not only your child's risk for ADD/ADHD, but also to assess for common co-morbidities that can be associated with ADHD, such as anxiety, depression, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder.

There are generally 2 approaches to treating ADD/ADHD - behavioral therapy and medication. Behavioral therapy is teaching your child to modify their behavior, and to learn the organizational skills that they will need for the rest of their life. Medication helps to fix the chemical imbalance in the brain, and usually improves focus, attention, and the ability to concentrate while decreasing impulsive and hyperactive behaviors.

If you have any concerns that your child might have ADD or ADHD behaviors, please schedule a consult with your pediatrician as soon as possible to address your concerns. Please do not wait until your child is failing every class or until your child has been labeled by their teacher as being "difficult" or "a behavior problem".



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