

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is typically diagnosed in childhood when a child has difficulty sustaining attention, acts impulsively, and/or is hyperactive.

There are 3 subtypes of ADHD:

1. **ADHD, Primarily Inattentive Type:** many people refer to this subtype as “ADD.” “ADD” is not a separate diagnosis
2. **ADHD, Primarily Hyperactive/Impulsive Type:** a child does not have to be hyperactive to have ADHD. Impulsivity can also be a problem. Children who are impulsive may:
 - a. Act without thinking
 - b. Interrupt others
 - c. Talk a lot
 - d. Start tasks before understanding the objective
3. **ADHD, Combined Type:** this is the most common type of ADHD. It means that a child has symptoms of inattention as well as problems with impulsivity and/or hyperactivity.

How is ADHD diagnosed?

ADHD is diagnosed by a physician, neuropsychologist or psychologist. ADHD cannot be diagnosed by a school, but teachers’ input is crucial to the diagnosis.

- A physical examination is completed to make sure a medical problem cannot explain the symptoms.
- The provider will gather information from you, your child and his/her teachers. If your child’s presentation is consistent with ADHD, your provider may make the diagnosis at that time or refer your child for additional assessment.
- In a full neuropsychological evaluation objective measures, such as paper-and-pencil or computer tests are used to assess attention and other cognitive abilities in order to rule-out other possible explanations (e.g., learning disability, mood disorder, processing deficit, memory problem). Neuropsychological evaluations also identify strengths and weaknesses to guide treatment and school



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How is ADHD treated?

A combination of medical and behavioral therapies is the best way to treat ADHD.

- There are several medications for treatment of ADHD, both stimulants and non-stimulants, and you should talk to your child's physician about whether or not using medication to treat ADHD is appropriate.
- Although some studies have shown that about 70% of people with ADHD get some benefit from medication, many parents opt to try behavioral therapy and other interventions first before adding medication.

Talk to a psychologist with expertise in treating ADHD to find out more about behavioral therapies.

Are there things that we can do at home or at school?

Yes. There are many things including social skills groups, parent training and school-based interventions.

- Structure with clear and consistent consequences – don't forget to point out all of the good things, too!
- Establish daily routines
- Use charts and remind him/her to refer to it for the next step
- Reduce television and video game time
- Encourage participation in organized athletics or community organizations
- Try martial arts; it provides a very structured environment with tangible rewards and emphasizes individual growth
- Get outside and play!
- Establish a healthy diet

Will my child always have ADHD?

An increase in ADHD symptoms is common in adolescence and may require changes to existing interventions. The symptoms of ADHD will change over time (e.g., less impulsivity or hyperactivity) and often continue into adulthood. However, individuals treated for ADHD develop strategies that lessen the impact the disorder has on their daily functioning.



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