

# CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

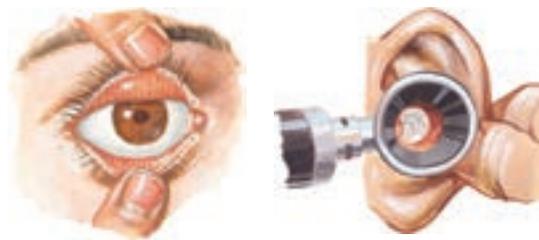
Between 2% and 7% of all children have ADHD. In school-age children, it occurs more in boys than in girls.



There is no specific test for ADHD. Observations of doctors, parents, teachers, and others are the basis for diagnosis. Depression and anxiety must be ruled out.



Your health care provider will ask about your family history to see if other children also have ADHD. Your child will have a physical examination, including tests of hearing and vision.



## What Is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

ADHD is a behavior disorder involving an inability to focus on tasks. Hyperactive behavior is part of ADHD.

Between 5% and 10% of children have ADHD, and in younger children, more boys than girls have it. Some children are able to control problem behaviors as they grow older, and others may have persistent symptoms of ADHD into adulthood. Certain children become troubled teenagers and adults with problems such as failure in school, antisocial behavior, and sometimes even criminal behavior.

No ways to prevent ADHD are known.

## What Causes ADHD?

The cause is unknown. It may occur in more than one child in a family.

Environmental factors and hereditary factors may play a role.

## What Are the Symptoms of ADHD?

Problem behaviors are the symptoms, usually in a child younger than 7.

Parents, teachers, and doctors may see the behaviors, which include inability to listen, follow instructions, wait turn in games and lines, or pay attention in school or at play; becoming easily distracted; losing things; shifting from one task to another; answering before a question is finished; interrupting or intruding; doing dangerous things without thinking; squirming or inability to stay seated; fidgeting with hands and feet; and talking constantly.

## How Is ADHD Diagnosed?

No specific test exists for ADHD. Observations of doctors, parents, teachers, and others are key. Depression and anxiety must be ruled out.

The health care provider will ask about the family history, do a physical examination (including hearing and eye tests), and check for learning disabilities and development level. For an ADHD diagnosis, the child must have six or more of eight specific symptoms for at least 6 months, and these must interfere with daily functions.



Some children outgrow ADHD. Others find it easier to control problem behavior as they grow up. In other children, ADHD may last into adulthood.



A combination of treatments is often needed. Drugs and behavioral methods are better when used together than when used alone.

Adults with ADHD should consider support groups for anger control. People with ADHD should exercise regularly and try to maintain structure and routine in their lives.



## FROM THE DESK OF

## NOTES

Adults with ADHD often have failed relationships, problems at work, and sometimes alcohol and drug abuse. Many such adults may have been misdiagnosed with anxiety or manic depressive disorders.

## How Is ADHD Treated?

The most effective treatment is combination of drugs and behavioral methods used together. Educational, behavioral, and cognitive methods may all be recommended. Drugs used most often are psychostimulants, which help people feel calmer, more relaxed, more focused, and less scattered in thinking.

The health care provider may also suggest counseling for child and parents. Support for parents is essential.

## DOs and DON'Ts in Managing ADHD:

- ✓ **DO** set clear behavior limits and reward good behavior.
- ✓ **DO** use time outs for bad behavior and stop problem behavior before it worsens.
- ✓ **DO** allow for more activity in safe environments.
- ✓ **DO** focus on one task at a time.
- ✓ **DO** try techniques such as anger training, social training, and family therapy, but avoid unproven therapies.
- ✓ **DO** have realistic expectations.
- ✓ **DO** talk regularly with your child's teacher.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if symptoms worsen after treatment begins.
- ✓ **DO** consider support groups for anger control, if you're an adult. Exercise regularly and try to maintain structure and routine.
- ⊗ **DON'T** forget follow-up appointments.
- ⊗ **DON'T** self-medicate with drugs or alcohol, or use too much caffeine or sugar as a teenager or adult.
- ⊗ **DON'T** increase medicine doses unless your health care provider says to.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Contact the following sources:

- CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)  
Tel: (301) 306-7070, (800) 233-4050  
**Website:** <http://www.chadd.org/>
- National Institute of Mental Health  
Tel: (866) 615-6464  
Email: [nimhinfo@nih.gov](mailto:nimhinfo@nih.gov)  
**Website:** <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>