

# Overactivity and Inattentiveness

**Being overactive or inattentive means that a child has a difficult time controlling his or her energy level, paying attention for long periods of time, or following directions.**

From time to time, it is normal for children to be overactive or have a hard time paying attention. This is especially true for young children. Parents should expect to see their children exhibit these behaviors at some point during normal child development. However, when symptoms of overactivity and inattentiveness begin to appear on a regular basis, occur in more than one setting, and interfere with a child's schoolwork and interactions with family, friends, and teachers, then it is possible he or she may have a mental health issue.

The following is a list of typical signs and symptoms of overactivity and inattentiveness.

Your child may be overactive if he or she:

- Fidgets or squirms in his or her seat and cannot sit still
- Cannot stay seated for long periods of time
- Runs around, jumps, or climbs on things in situations where it is not appropriate
- Has difficulty playing quietly
- Is in constant motion or acts like he or she is being “driven by a motor”
- Talks too much
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Has difficulty waiting for his or her turn
- Interrupts others during conversations or games

Your child may be inattentive if he or she:

- Has a hard time paying attention or daydreams a lot
- Does not seem to be listening when you or others are talking
- Is easily distracted from schoolwork or play
- Makes careless mistakes and does not appear to care about details
- Does not follow through with instructions and has a hard time finishing tasks
- Is disorganized with activities and tasks at home or school
- Loses important things easily

- Is forgetful
- Does not want to engage in activities that require long periods of thinking

Possible mental health diagnoses within this symptom cluster include:

- Anxiety Disorders (p48)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (p52)
- Bipolar Disorder (p59)
- Depression (p67)
- Learning Disorders (p75)

