

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**You may notice that your child is misbehaving or acting differently than other children, but you may not know exactly what is wrong. This is a common feeling among parents with children who are later diagnosed with ADHD.**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) causes children to have difficulty paying attention in school, have impulsive behavior, or have trouble staying focused when playing. While all children may show signs of inattention, distractibility, impulsivity, or hyperactivity at times, a child with ADHD shows these signs more frequently and severely than other children of the same age or developmental level.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Typical signs and symptoms of ADHD include:

- Trouble paying attention
- Making careless mistakes and not paying attention to details
- Easily distracted
- Losing school supplies and forgetting to turn in homework
- Trouble finishing class work and homework
- Trouble listening
- Trouble following multiple adult commands (directions or instructions)
- Blurting out answers
- Impatience
- Fidgeting or squirming
- Leaving seat and running about or climbing excessively
- Seeming “on the go”
- Talking too much and difficulty playing quietly
- Interrupting or intruding on others

## EVALUATION AND DIAGNOSIS

Signs and symptoms of ADHD are often recognized by the school system because the child’s behavior frequently interrupts and causes trouble in the classroom. ADHD usually begins and is diagnosed before age 7 and can continue to affect the child through to adulthood. If you think your child has ADHD, your child may need an ADHD evaluation. For more information, turn to

**MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS (p39).**

## *ADHD and ADD*

These two diagnoses are often lumped together because they are very similar. ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) is like ADHD, without the “H” which stands for Hyperactivity. Children diagnosed with ADD have symptoms of inattention and distractibility, without the impulsivity and hyperactivity that characterize children with ADHD. Children with ADD tend to be quieter. Their minds may be constantly “on the move”, but they may not show it. Instead, they tend to daydream more. Because the child’s behavior is oftentimes less disruptive, ADD is often a difficult diagnosis to make. ADD tends to be more common in girls.

## TYPICAL CO-EXISTING DIAGNOSES

Common mental health diagnoses that co-exist with ADHD include:

- Anxiety Disorders (p48)
- Bipolar Disorder (p59)
- Conduct Disorder (p64)
- Depression (p67)
- Learning Disorders (p75)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) (p82)
- Substance Abuse and Dependence (p94)

## TREATMENT

ADHD can be treated by a pediatrician, a developmental behavioral pediatrician, a neurologist, or a child and adolescent psychiatrist. For more information on mental health specialists, turn to page 106 in **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**.

A child who is diagnosed with ADHD and receives appropriate treatment can live a productive and successful life. Some of the treatment options for children with ADHD include ADHD medication, parent management training, and psychoeducation. When children also have a co-existing diagnosis, they may need psychotherapy, as well. For more information, turn to **MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT (p147)**.

If ADHD is affecting the child's ability to learn, adjustments may need to be made in his or her education program. For more information on the school system, turn to page 118 in **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**.

Roughly 5 out of 100 school-age children have ADHD, but fewer than that have been diagnosed and treated.

## RESOURCES

CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder)  
800-233-4050  
www.chadd.org

CHADD of Rhode Island  
401-943-9399

*Driven To Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood Through Adulthood* (1995)  
By Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey