



ADHD

The diagnosis of ADHD has become widespread, getting overused and misused. And while some are inappropriately diagnosed and medicated, many others go undiagnosed based on a misperception of the symptoms (perceiving a child to be lazy or lacking in effort), the symptom profile, or a child's other skills/traits that help compensate for their difficulties with attention. For some children though, their strong interest and best effort to be a good student doesn't outweigh their impulsive behavior and difficulty focusing/staying on task. Even when teachers and parents know that the child isn't intentionally misbehaving, they may not know what is wrong or how to make things better.

Any child may show inattention, distractibility, impulsivity, or hyperactivity at times, but the child with ADHD shows these symptoms and behaviors more frequently and severely than other children of the same age or developmental level. Common signs of ADHD include:

- trouble paying attention
- inattention to details and makes careless mistakes
- easily distracted
- loses school supplies, forgets to turn in homework
- trouble finishing class work and homework
- trouble listening
- trouble following multiple adult commands
- blurts out answers
- impatience
- fidgets or squirms
- leaves seat and runs about or climbs excessively
- seems "on the go"
- talks too much and has difficulty playing quietly
- interrupts or intrudes on others

When ADHD is present, symptoms will usually be noticed in more than one setting (for example, problems at school, home, with friends, or while playing sports). Problems are typically noticeable early in development (prior to age seven). If symptoms are mild or if only inattention is present, ADHD may go unnoticed until later in childhood. Problems related to untreated ADHD may become more apparent as your child gets older. Symptoms are often more noticeable when demands at school increase and when children are expected to have greater responsibility for organization and time management (for instance, homework and project completion for multiple classes and having to switch

class several times during the day). Untreated ADHD can be misperceived as laziness or lack of motivation and there may be a sense that your child could/should be doing better in school than his/her current performance.

Without proper treatment, the child may fall behind in schoolwork, and friendships may suffer. The child experiences more failure than success and is criticized by teachers and family who do not recognize a health problem. This in turn can lead to anxiety and/or depression, which can serve to exacerbate attentional problems.

Research supports a multimodal approach to treatment that includes a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy, social skills training, parent education, medication and modifications to the child's education program. Behavioral therapy can help a child control aggression, modulate social behavior, and be more productive. Cognitive therapy can help a child build self-esteem, reduce negative thoughts, and improve problem-solving skills. Parents can learn management skills such as issuing instructions one-step at a time rather than issuing multiple requests at once. Education modifications can address ADHD symptoms along with any coexisting learning disabilities. While some parents are reluctant to utilize medication, research clearly demonstrates that medication can help improve attention, focus, goal directed behavior, and organizational skills.

Links:

[Academic concerns](#)

[Defiance/oppositional behavior](#)

[Sleep problems](#)

[Anxiety](#)

[Depression](#)

[Social concerns](#)