

ADHD Introduction



Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is a common psychiatric condition that affects between 3-9% of school-age children. Youngsters with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder are characterized by symptoms such as high levels of inattention, distractibility, hyperactivity, or impulsivity. While these types of behavior are common in younger children, the symptoms are more severe for youngsters with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and can cause impairment in school, at home, or in social situations.

Many children who do not have Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder display some of the symptoms in a milder form or may experience symptoms but do not appear to be impaired by their levels of activity or inattention. These children, who are sometimes referred to as having borderline or non-clinical levels of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, are often helped by many of the same strategies used and recommendations given for youngsters who meet the criteria for a diagnosis of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

Parents are often confused by the terminology that psychologists and mental health professionals use in describing attention disorders. Parents often ask about the differences between ADD and ADHD. The reason for this confusion is due to certain changes in the system used for psychiatric diagnosis. Currently, there is no actual psychiatric disorder called ADD, or Attention Deficit Disorder. All individuals who are diagnosed with attention problems have one variety or another of ADHD, or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. The ADD, or Attention Deficit Disorder, diagnosis comes from a system known as the DSM-III, which was used during the 1980s. A system known as DSM-IV was published in 1994 and now refers to all attention problems as ADHD, or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

In the DSM-IV, all varieties of attention problems have both the terms "Attention Deficit" and "Hyperactivity" in their titles. There are four varieties of ADHD:

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Inattentive Type -- This subtype describes individuals whose primary symptoms revolve around inattention.

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type -- This subtype describes individuals whose primary symptoms are activity-based but also encounter moderate attention problems.
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Combined Type -- This is the most common type of attention problem, and it describes those individuals in whom the symptoms of both inattention and high levels of activity are observed.
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified -- This subtype describes individuals who have many symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder but do not meet the full criteria for a diagnosis of one of the other subtypes. It is often used to describe individuals who display many signs of executive functioning difficulties, such as problems with working memory, processing speed, organizational skills, and task persistence.

To learn more about the specific symptoms of each of the Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder subtypes and to find specific recommendations for youngsters with these types of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, click on the links below. Also, if you are interested in recommendations for parents or suggestions regarding school settings, click on those links below.

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Inattentive Type
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Combined Type
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified
- For Parents: Attention/Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder--An Alternative Perspective
- School Strategies for Children with ADHD

To help you determine where to initiate your efforts, we have listed the symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder as they appear in the DSM-IV. Keep in mind that while the DSM-IV requires that children have at least six of the inattention or hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms for a diagnosis, many children who display three or four of these symptoms may experience a degree of impairment as a result of these problems; many of the recommendations in our handouts will be helpful for them.

Symptoms

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (DSM-IV) divides the symptoms of ADHD into two categories: those of inattentiveness and those of hyperactivity and impulsivity.

To be diagnosed with ADHD, children should have at least 6 attention symptoms or 6 activity/impulsivity symptoms (i.e. should manifest such symptoms to a degree beyond that which would be expected for children their age).

The symptoms must be present for at least 6 months, must be observed in 2 or more settings, and must be determined to not be caused by another problem. The symptoms must be severe enough to cause significant impairments. Some symptoms must be present before the age of 7.

Older children have ADHD in partial remission when they still have symptoms but no longer meet the full definition of the disorder.

Some children with ADHD primarily have the Inattentive Type, some the Hyperactive-Impulsive Type, and some the Combined Type. Those with the Inattentive Type are less disruptive and more easily evade an ADHD diagnosis.

Inattention symptoms:

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork
- Has difficulty sustaining attention while engaging in tasks or play
- Does not seem to listen when directly spoken to
- Does not follow through with instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace
- Has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Avoids or dislikes tasks that require sustained mental effort, such as schoolwork
- Often loses toys, assignments, pencils, books, or other tools needed for tasks or activities
- Is easily distracted
- Is often forgetful during daily activities

Recommended Websites

<http://learningworksforkids.com/> (The best website for learning how to use innovative technologies to help your child with ADHD)

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhd.cfm> (The National Institute of Mental Health website offers extensive information that addresses a number of questions parents and teachers might have about ADHD.)

<http://www.chadd.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Understanding> (A large ADHD organization that has many great resources.)

http://www.idonline.org/ld_indepth/add_adhd/add-adhd.html (A site that provides basic information about ADHD, its common treatments, legal rights, and useful intervention ideas for teachers and parents.)

<http://www.help4adhd.org/> (The National Resource Center for ADHD website, established through U.S. Center for Disease Control [CDC], answers FAQ's, provides links to reliable websites, and provides opportunities to ask questions of specialists.)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/adhd/DS00275/DSECTION=symptoms> (Mayo Clinic provides a good overall description of ADHD symptoms.)

http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/learning/adhd.html# (A website for teens with ADHD that includes a list of strategies for teens to employ in their own lives as well as books that they may be interested in reading.)

http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/medicine_cabinet/adhd_medications.html (A website that provides reliable information about medication for ADHD.)

<http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/tc/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd-medications>

(Another site from which to learn about medication for ADHD.)

Selected Books on ADHD for Parents

Barkley, Russell A. Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2000. *A comprehensive guide by the leading expert on ADHD.*

Honos-Webb, Lara. The Gift of ADHD: How to Transform Your Child's Problems into Strengths. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2005. *Suggests that many of the traits that label kids with ADHD may be an expression of deeper gifts and offers new positive techniques for dealing with ADHD.*

Ingersoll, Barbara. Daredevils and Daydreamers. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2003. *A well-written update of Your Hyperactive Child. Readable, informative, and detailed.*

Iseman, Jacqueline S., Sue Jeweler, and Stephan M. Silverman. School Success for Kids with ADHD. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, 2009. *Strategies to help your ADHD child at school.*

Monastra, Vincent J. Parenting Children with ADHD: 10 Lessons that Medicine Cannot Teach (APA Lifetools). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2004. *Explains the causes of ADHD and how nutrition, medication, and certain therapeutic procedures can improve attention, concentration, and behavioral control. Includes a plan for parents and ways to work with children's schools.*

Parker, Harvey C. Problem Solver Guide for Students with ADHD. North Branch, MN: Specialty Press, 2001. *Ideas for study habits, socialization, and written language skills.*

Ratey, John J., M.D. with Eric Hagerman. Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008. *Great book describing how exercise improves attention, learning, and stress management.*

Rief, Sandra F. How To Reach and Teach Children with ADD/ADHD: Practical Techniques, Strategies, and Interventions. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005. *Includes real-life case studies, interviews, student intervention plans, and strategies for enhancing classroom performance.*

Selected Books on ADHD for Children and Teens

Galvin, Matthew R. Otto Learns about His Medicine: A Story about Medication for Children with ADHD. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2001. *This book about a car helps explain to children why they should take their medication to feel better. Ages 4-8.*

Kraus, Jeanne. Annie's Plan: Taking Charge of Schoolwork and Homework. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2006. *Presents a 10-Point Schoolwork Plan and a 10-Point Homework Plan that can help readers master organizational and study skills.*

Nadeau, Kathleen G. and Ellen B. Dixon Learning to Slow Down & Pay Attention: A Book for Kids about ADHD. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2004. *Suggestions for and challenges encountered in ADHD. Ages 6-11.*

Petersen, Christine. Does Everyone Have ADHD? A Teen's Guide to Diagnosis and Treatment. London: Franklin Watts, 2007. *A guide designed for teens to understand ADHD and how to treat it. For teens.*

Quinn, Patricia O. and Judith M. Stern (Eds.). Putting on the Brakes, Second Edition: Understanding or Taking Control of Your ADD or ADHD. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2008. *A collection of articles, activities, and puzzles for children with ADD. Ages 8-13.*

Hyperactivity/Impulsivity symptoms:

- Fidgets with hands and/or feet or squirms in seat
- Leaves seat when expected to remain seated
- Runs about or climbs in inappropriate situations
- Has difficulty playing quietly

- Often acts as though "on-the-go," as if "driven by a motor," and/or talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Has difficulty waiting his/her turn
- Interrupts or intrudes on others, butting into conversations or games