

ADHD

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a chronic brain condition that makes it hard for children to control their behavior, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children with ADHD, severe and very frequent behavior problems disrupt their everyday lives, including their experience at school. The AAP says that ADHD has become one of the most common and most studied conditions of childhood.

Top 12 Signs and Symptoms of ADHD, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1. A child with ADHD might have a hard time paying attention.
2. A child with ADHD may daydream a lot.
3. A child with ADHD may not seem to listen.
4. A child with ADHD may be easily distracted from schoolwork or play.
5. A child with ADHD might forget things.
6. A child with ADHD may be in constant motion or unable to stay seated.
7. A child with ADHD may squirm or fidget.
8. A child with ADHD may talk too much.
9. A child with ADHD may not be able to play quietly.
10. A child with ADHD may act and speak without thinking.
11. A child with ADHD may have trouble taking turns.
12. A child with ADHD may interrupt others.

As the number of children being treated for ADHD has risen, the AAP is unsure whether an increased amount of kids actually have the disorder or if it is just being diagnosed more. Children are also undergoing treatment for a longer period of time. ADHD usually continues into adulthood, and there is no cure at this time.

What Moms Can Do about ADHD

Moms who suspect their child may have ADHD should contact their doctor, according to Dr. Gwenn Schurgin O'Keeffe, MD, FAAP, the CEO and chief editor of Pediatrics Now.

Dr. Gwenn says, "Talk to your pediatrician. There are simple questionnaires you can fill out to see if there are symptoms of ADHD going on. Child psychologists can sometimes help with this, too, and if meds are needed, child psychiatrists are the folks to consult. (There are many choices of meds these days beyond Ritalin.) Keep in mind that if your child is doing fine in school and just shows signs of inattention or overactivity at home, ADHD is the wrong diagnosis to explore: true ADHD interferes with learning and school.

If your child is having trouble learning, his school owes it to him -- and you -- to help sort out what's going on. Push them to test your kid!"

If your child is diagnosed with ADHD, treatment will include medication, psychotherapy, education, and training, or a combination of those treatments, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Stimulants (including Ritalin) are the most common types of medicine used to curb the symptoms of ADHD. They have a calming effect on children with ADHD, and the National Institute of Mental Health says they often provide the following benefits: reduced hyperactivity and impulsivity, improved physical coordination, and improved ability to focus, learn, and work.

Not all types of stimulants or dosage amounts are universal. The National Institute of Mental Health stresses that children taking stimulants must be monitored by parents and doctors. Common side effects of stimulants are decreased appetite, anxiety, irritability, and problems sleeping.

In February 2007, the FDA told manufacturers of approved drugs used to treat ADHD to develop patient Medication Guides informing people about potential cardiovascular risks and risks of adverse psychiatric symptoms linked to the medications. One drug, the non-stimulant atomoxetine (Strattera), has been associated with suicidal thoughts. Studies showed that kids and teens taking the drug were more likely to think about suicide than those with ADHD who were not using the medicine, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, which urges parents with children taking atomoxetine to watch their kid's behavior daily.

The National Institute of Mental Health funded research that demonstrated that medication works best when it is regularly monitored by the prescribing doctor and the dose is altered based on the child's needs.

Therapy may also help a child with ADHD to make behavior changes and improve his social skills. The rest of the family may benefit from therapy as well, says the National Institute of Mental Health. Parents can receive education about ADHD and help in developing skills to more effectively respond to the child's behavior. Therapy can also help parents process their own feelings.

Moms who have children with ADHD should know that the American Academy of Pediatrics says that they can grow up to lead successful adult lives -- using tactics such as nurturing their strengths, structuring their environments, and taking medication as directed.

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- [I Need All Moms \(and Dads on Here\) for Some Serious Help and Advice](#)
- [Has Your Child Been Diagnosed with ADHD?](#)

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1. [ADHD Drugs Stunt Kids' Growth](#)
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Additional Resources for ADHD

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)