



ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A consistent pattern of behavior that includes inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is common and affects 3% to 5% of children. It also affects adults.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Squirms in seat; fidgets with hands or feet.
- Unable to stay seated when required to do so.
- Easily distracted.
- Blurts out answers before a question is finished.
- Difficulty waiting turn in games and lines.
- Difficulty following instructions.
- Unable to sustain attention in work or play activities.
- Shifts from one uncompleted project to another.
- Difficulty playing quietly.
- Talks excessively.
- Interrupts or intrudes on others.
- Doesn't appear to listen.
- Loses items needed for tasks.
- Often engages in dangerous activities without considering consequences.

CAUSES

Unknown. Many theories have been proposed, but none have been proven as yet. It is thought to have a biologic origin. Recent studies suggest that TV watching by young children (age 3 and younger) may be a factor.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Family history of the disorder.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures known.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most people don't outgrow ADHD, but do learn to adapt and live fulfilling lives.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Later problems may occur, such as school failure, antisocial behavior, and (sometimes) criminal behavior.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- The child's teacher may be the first to notice the behavior. A school psychologist, your child's doctor, or a special health care provider may diagnose the disorder. Several methods are used to help make the diagnosis. These include observing the child doing activities, mental, social, and intelligence tests, parent's and teacher's evaluation, and rating scales about behaviors.
- Adults are diagnosed based on their performance at work and at home. When possible, their parents rate how the person behaved as a child.
- Treatment for children includes appropriate classroom setting, behavior therapy, drug therapy, and help for parents in managing the child's behavior. A combination of these techniques will have the best outcome.
- Adult patients may have drug therapy and counseling.
- Counseling can help, as can behavior and cognitive therapy. These help child and adult patients focus on ways to change the undesired behavior.
- Help your child at home by providing a structured environment, well-defined behavior limits, and consistent use of parenting techniques.
- Special education classes for all or part of the day may be needed for some children.
- Stay in close contact with the child's teacher. Arrange for extra lessons or tutoring if the child needs help.
- Support groups or parenting skills training are helpful.
- To learn more: Attention Deficit Disorder Association, P.O. Box 543, Pottstown, PA 19464; (800) 487-2282; website: www.add.org.

MEDICATIONS

- Stimulant drugs (have a calming affect on persons with ADHD) or other drugs approved for ADHD may be prescribed. Some of these drugs have side effects, such as sleep problems, depression, headache, stomachache, loss of appetite, and stunted growth.
- Antidepressants may be prescribed for adults.

ACTIVITY

Structure your child's activity to the extent possible.

DIET

Most medical research indicates that special diets benefit very few children. Many parents, however, report dramatic changes in behavior after this treatment. This change may result from the extra attention the child receives with preparation of special meals. Discuss any special diets with your child's health care provider.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You believe your child or a family member has symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder.

- Symptoms become worse after treatment is started.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

