

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



What Is ADHD? How Can You Help Your Child?

What Causes ADHD?

One of the first things that parents ask is, “Why? What caused this?” The causes seem to be related to issues with the brain.¹ ADHD can run in families.¹ Use of cigarettes and alcohol during pregnancy may have been a risk for ADHD in the child of that pregnancy.¹ ADHD is not caused by having “bad parents” or watching too much TV.² Try not to focus on causes. Look ahead and find ways to help your child.

ADHD is attention deficit hyperactivity (uh-TEN-shen DEF-uh-sit HI-per-ak-TIV-it-ee) disorder. There are three kinds of ADHD¹:

1. One type causes kids to have a hard time paying attention. It is hard for them to complete things. They may look like they daydream a lot. They may seem like they are not listening. These kids have a hard time getting their homework done.¹
2. Another type of ADHD causes kids to be much more active than other kids of the same age. They can't sit still. This is sometimes called being “hyperactive.” These kids may run or climb where they shouldn't. They may talk too much or interrupt people. They may find it hard to wait their turn. This is called being “impulsive.”¹
3. The third type of ADHD is when the child has a combination of #1 and #2. In this type, a child has trouble paying attention and is hyperactive and impulsive.¹

How Do You Know If Your Child Has ADHD?

You might suspect your child has ADHD because of how he or she behaves. Your child's teacher may also tell you about behavior or actions at school that could be ADHD. Your child's doctor may refer you to a specialist who is trained in ADHD.

Be prepared to tell your doctor details about your child. The doctor will talk to your child. The doctor will also ask you about how your child behaves in different places. The doctor may ask that your child's teacher fill out forms about the child's behavior.

The doctor takes these things into account when trying to see if your child has ADHD¹:

- Does the behavior in your child occur more often than in other children of the same age?
- Does the behavior continue over time (at least six months)?
- Does the behavior occur in more than one place (at home and on the school playground, as an example)?
- Does the behavior cause problems in two or more areas of a child's life (for example, at home and at school)?



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What can you do?

It can be tough to be the parent of a child with ADHD. Here are some tips to help at home²:

- Look into your child's eyes when you speak. Make directions simple and short.
- Let your child know what you expect of them. Enforce the rules that you set.
- Reward good behavior. Give your child praise after each step of a task is completed.
- Reward effort. Give your child praise when homework or other tasks are finished.
- Talk to your child's teacher. Ask them if they will help make sure your child brings home the right homework and books.

What Happens If the Doctor Says Your Child Has ADHD?

You and the doctor will decide how to treat your child:

- Your child's doctor may think it would be a good idea for your child to see a therapist or another type of specialist.
- Sometimes it is helpful for parents to see a therapist or join a support group. That way they can learn new ways to work with their child.
- The doctor may suggest a drug that can help your child.

Routines and Schedules

Being organized is hard for kids with ADHD. You can help in these ways:

- Set up a home plan that stays the same every day. Schedule time for outdoor play, indoor play, naps, chores, and homework. Post the schedule where your child will see it.¹
- Set up a homework routine. Break homework into parts. Let your child take breaks after each part of the homework gets done.²
- Have a special place for all the things your child needs every day. This way your child will always know where to find clothes, school supplies, and other things.²
- Use folders and notebooks to help your child organize homework.¹

You are your child's champion. Learn as much as you can about ADHD. That way you can continue to help and support your child.

References

1. NIMH. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/NIMHAdhdpub.pdf>
2. familydoctor.org. ADHD What Parents Should Know. <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/children/parents/behavior/118.html>

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