



ADHD: Frequently Asked Questions



ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder) is a neuro-genetic disorder that causes difficulties and deficits in self-control, or the ability to stop and think before acting.

Deficits in several areas, including sustained attention and resistance to distraction, the ability to regulate one's activity level (hyperactivity) and the ability to stop one's immediate response to an event or situation (impulsivity), cause difficulties with self-control.

What are the signs and symptoms of ADHD?

Children with ADHD typically exhibit behavioral symptoms that impact their school and family functioning and peer relations. These include:

- **Hyperactive and Impulsive Behavior:** The child often makes snap decisions, does the first thing that comes to mind, exhibits frequent interruptions, and has difficulties waiting his or her turn and remaining seated or still.
- **Inattentiveness:** The child may have difficulties resisting distractions, staying on task and paying attention. The child also may daydream, have a hard time following through on tasks and assignments, and make frequent, careless mistakes, such as losing and misplacing items.

When does a child with ADHD begin to exhibit symptoms?

Symptoms of ADHD typically become more apparent when a child enters into a structured educational setting, especially for the subtypes associated with hyperactive and impulsive behavior. Individuals who have predominantly inattentive ADHD may appear to develop attention problems in middle or later childhood. The vast majority of those with the disorder have some symptoms before age 13, so the disorder is believed to be one of childhood onset.

What common mistakes do parents make when reading the symptoms?

Children with ADHD often struggle because they have difficulty stopping an immediate emotional reaction to an event. As a result, parents and other caregivers

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may overinterpret angry outbursts or excessive emotional reactions. It is important to remember that children with ADHD may need assistance in learning to deal with their emotions.

Because many children with ADHD are impulsive, and therefore act without thinking, parents and other caregivers sometimes use frequent punishment to address misbehaviors. This is often ineffective, as punishment alone may work only for a short period of time. Therefore, it is important to use proactive strategies to address behavior, including:

- Providing frequent reminders of rules and expectations
- Giving frequent praise and acknowledgement for acceptable and desirable behaviors

What are some ways to manage ADHD?

There are many treatment components that can help manage ADHD. They include:

- Educating a child's family and staff at his or her school about the nature of the disorder and its management.
- Using a combination of stimulant medication and behavior modification to manage symptoms of ADHD. Parent training in child behavior management methods and behavior modification also can improve management of ADHD symptoms.
- Maintaining behavior modification treatment over long periods of time in order to sustain the initial treatment progress.

What should I do if I think my child has ADHD?

If you are noticing that your child is exhibiting symptoms that interfere with his or her academic development, friendships or family functions, schedule an appointment with your pediatrician. If your pediatrician thinks your child may have symptoms of ADHD, consider obtaining a referral to a psychologist so your child can receive a thorough assessment prior to initiating any treatment.



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Additional Resource

→ *Taking Charge of ADHD, Third Edition: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents* by Russell A. Barkley

➡ **For more information** or to make an appointment at the Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health, call **531-355-3358**.

Visit **BoysTown.org/Parenting** for more information from the parenting experts at Boys Town.