

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Children & Adolescents

Diagnosis & Treatment Guidelines for Consumers and Families



WHAT IS ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)?

If your child has ADHD, they are not alone. Three to five percent of school kids have ADHD and up to 70% of those children continue to have symptoms into adulthood. Not only does ADHD upset the child's daily life, it can affect family relations and dealings with others. You may have seen the signs before your child turned seven. Your child may have other illnesses they are being treated for. The following things may be seen in all children:

- Act without thinking
- Run around a lot
- Be easily distracted
- Seem not to listen
- Can't fall asleep easily
- May be forgetful
- Fail to follow through on parents/teachers requests
- Have difficulty getting along with others
- Not able to complete school work
- Have a hard time following rules
- Have a hard time sitting still
- Do poorly in school

When these symptoms are more severe or not usual for the age of the child, the child may have ADHD.

You may seek help for your child because you, your child's doctor, teacher, or school counselor thinks he or she may need help. An assessment of your child is the next step. You may be asked about how your child acts and how well they are able to pay attention.

You and your child's teacher may be asked to keep records of how your child acts. Your child's doctor will examine your child and may tell you that your child needs medicine.

These materials are presented as an educational resource and as helpful information to you. These materials are in no way meant to represent medical or clinical advice, recommendations or therapy. If you have any issues regarding your medical or mental health condition and need advice, please consult your provider/doctor.

Making a plan for how to treat your child is the next step. Members of your child's treatment team may include you, your doctor, a case manager, therapist, and counselors. It may also include other children or other family members. A treatment plan is like a road map that you and your child build along with the treatment team. Your child's treatment plan may include:

- Learning about ADHD and how to cope with the way you and your child feel.
- Treatment for your child and the family, anger management, training in social skills and medication.
- Having your family, a special friend, or school counselor help you and your child.
- Support for you and the rest of your family.

Your child's treatment plan has goals for you, your child, and your family. It should help you reach those goals. It is supposed to help your child feel better. If your child doesn't feel better with treatment, tell your doctor or case manager. The treatment team may recommend parent support groups, parenting training and behavior management training. They may give you information on how you can better understand your child and how to help them.

From time to time, you and your child will go back to your therapist or doctor. This is to see how well your child is doing with the treatment plan. The therapist or doctor will ask about your family and your child. They will want to know about the way your child has been acting and about the medicine they are taking. After hearing what you have to say, and examining your child, the therapist or doctor may advise you to stay with treatment as it is, make changes, or suggest other helpful areas of support.

Medication by itself is not often enough to help your child. But medication can be helpful in treating ADHD. Your child should be seen by a physician well informed in the treatment of ADHD. By working together, you and your doctor will choose the best kind of medicine, if any, for your child. When your child takes the medicine, they may start to feel or act better right away. However, some medications may take 4-6 weeks to reach their full effect. Ask your doctor how long it should take for the medicine to work. Sometimes it takes more than one kind of medicine. Do not give up hope.

Taking medicine is not always easy. Sometimes your child may not want to take it. When your child takes their medicine, they have a better chance of feeling better. Even when your child takes the medicine, they may not feel or act better. Monitor changes in your child's behavior. Share this with your doctor or therapist. Your doctor may want to add another medication, change the amount, or change the medicine altogether. It is very important for you to tell your doctor if your child uses any of the following drugs: over-the-counter (non-prescription), prescription, street drugs or alcohol. Some drugs do not mix well with others and may cause dangerous side effects.

Talk with your child's doctor about medicine. Ask the doctor:

- What kinds of side effects can my child have if I give him or her this medicine?
- How do I give this medicine to my child?
- Will this new medicine interact with the other medicines that my child takes?
- How will I know when it is working?

Tell the doctor if your child:

- Has ever taken this medicine.
- Changes the way they act with the medicine.
- Shows side effects such as not sleeping or eating, stomachaches, is less or more active or other changes.
- Is acting or behaving differently since taking the medication.

If the child or the parent has any questions or complaints about the medicine, talk to your doctor.

Each time you go to see your doctor, you should tell the doctor:

- How you feel about the treatment you are getting.
- How you think your child's medicine is working.

This will let your doctor know how your child is doing and if they are taking the best medicine in the best amount. It will also help you to know that your doctor is working with you.

What is “informed consent”? Your doctor will tell you about:

- Your child's medicine.
- How and why they should use it.
- The side effects some people have when they take this medicine.
- Other kinds of treatment for your child's illness that you may want to try.

After you have been informed of all these things, you may be asked to sign a paper called an “informed consent” or give your “informed consent” verbally. By giving “informed consent”, it means that you understand and agree with what your doctor wants you to do. It is your right not to sign this paper or give verbal consent. If you do give consent, you have the right to take back your consent at any time.

Resources for Parents

- **Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CH.A.D.D)** www.chadd.org. 8181 Professional Place, Suite 150, Landover, MD 20785, Phone 800-233-4050, FAX 301-306-7090. A national non-profit organization of parents, health care professionals, and educators whose mission is to better the lives of individuals with ADD and those who care for them.
- **Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)**, www.add.org., ADDA P.O. Box 543, Pottstown, PA 19464, Phone: 484-945-2101 Fax: 610-970-7520 The ADDA serves as information and referral networks for assisting individuals, parents, teachers, and mental health professionals in locating various resource materials of ADHD (e.g., books, manuals, other printed materials, videos, etc.) and identifying local support groups or networks in a given area.
- **Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC)**, www.ecac-parentcenter.org, 907 Barra Row, Suites 102/103 Davidson, NC 28036, 800-962-6817. ECAC is a federally funded program to aid families of children with special needs. They offer referrals, parents and individual educational, an ADD packet, a newsletter, lending library and other information.