

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*
Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Children and Adolescents
Information for Parents and Caregivers

Definition

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by *developmentally inappropriate* levels of:

- Inattention (trouble focusing, getting distracted, trouble paying attention, making careless mistakes, losing things, trouble following through on things, poor organization, doesn't seem to be listening)
- Impulsivity (acting without thinking, interrupting, intruding, talking excessively, difficulty waiting for turns)
- Hyperactivity (trouble sitting still, fidgeting, feeling restless, difficulty engaging in quiet activities)

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder that affects 3 to 7 percent of school-age children. Until relatively recently, it was believed that children outgrew ADHD in adolescence as hyperactivity often lessens during the teen years. However, it is now known that ADHD nearly always persists from childhood through adolescence and that many symptoms continue into adulthood. In fact, current research reflects rates of roughly 2 to 4 percent among adults.

There are three types of ADHD:

- ADHD Combined Type (trouble with inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity)
 - "Classic ADHD"
- ADHD Predominately Inattentive Type (trouble with attention, sluggish)
 - Most common type, often picked up later than the other types
- ADHD Predominately Hyperactive Impulsive Type (trouble with impulsivity and hyperactivity)
 - Occurs more often in younger children

Why do we care?

Although individuals with this disorder can be very successful in life, without proper identification and treatment, ADHD may have serious consequences, including school failure, family stress and disruption, depression, problems with relationships, substance abuse, delinquency, risk for accidental injuries and job failure. Additionally, at least 2/3 of individuals with ADHD have another co-existing condition, such as learning problems, anxiety or behavior problems. Early identification and treatment are extremely important.

What can we do about it?

- **Take your child or adolescent for an evaluation if ADHD is suspected.**
 - There are several types of professionals who can diagnose ADHD, including school psychologists, clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, nurse practitioners, neurologists, psychiatrists and pediatricians.
- **Once diagnosed, ADHD in children often requires a comprehensive approach to treatment called "*multimodal*" and includes:**
 - Parent and child education about diagnosis and treatment
 - Behavior management techniques
 - Medication
 - School programming and supports
- **Specific strategies to use at home include:**
 - Set up a daily school-home note system with your child's teacher(s)
 - Be consistent
 - Have set rules and consequences
 - Use praise and rewards frequently
 - Set up a reward system at home
 - Identify a homework buddy or tutor to help with homework

- Learn as much as you can about ADHD so you can be a strong advocate
 - Consider taking a course on ADHD taught by a parent with a child with ADHD. To find one near you, go to <http://www.chadd.org/parent2parent/index.htm>
- Identify a mental health professional who can help you to set up a behavioral management program
- Ask your therapist to improve social relationships by:
 - systematic teaching of social skills in a social skills group
 - teaching social problem solving
 - teaching other behavioral skills often considered important by children, such as sports skills and board game rules
 - decreasing undesirable and antisocial behaviors
 - helping your child in developing a close friendship

Key Resources/Links

1. **National Resource Center on AD/HD: A Program of CHADD**, funded through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.help4adhd.org/index.cfm>
2. **Identifying and Treating Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Resource for School and Home** <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/needs/speced/adhd/adhd-resource-pt1.pdf>
This U.S. Department of Education resource guide is designed for families and educators and provides information on the identification of AD/HD and educational services for children with AD/HD.
3. **Directory of PTIs and CPRCs** <http://www.taalliance.org/centers/index.htm> Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance) establishes and coordinates parent training centers nationwide. These training centers -- Parent Training and Information centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) -- serve families of children and young adults with all disabilities from birth to age 22. Each state has at least one parent center, and states with large populations may have more. There are approximately 100 parent centers in the United States.

Additional Resources

1. **ADHD.com:** <http://www.adhd.com/parents/parents.jsp> - A website providing parents and caregivers with information and tools regarding ADHD
2. **Center for Children and Families, University of Buffalo** Free downloadable forms and resources for clinicians, caregivers, and educators working with children ADHD
http://ccf.buffalo.edu/resources_downloads.php
3. **ADHD: What Parents Need to Know:** <http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/yourchild/adhd.htm>
4. **What Is ADHD?:** <http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/adhd.html>
5. **Medline Plus - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:**
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/attentiondeficithyperactivitydisorder.html>
6. **ADHD Parents Medication Guide:** http://www.parentsmedguide.org/ParentGuide_English.pdf

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*