

What is ADHD?

When parents and/or teachers notice that a child is having trouble listening, or behaving quickly without thinking of the consequences or just having trouble sitting down, they may suspect that the child has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Since any child can show inattention, impulsivity or hyperactivity, it is important to consult a professional for a comprehensive evaluation. Children with ADHD show these symptoms more frequently and more severely than other children of the same age and developmental level. Often the child wants to be a good student and not cause disruption at home or in school, but the difficulty with paying attention and the impulsivity prevent these accomplishments.

Some of the behaviors that may occur are:

- making careless mistakes in school work
- losing school supplies, forgetting to turn in homework
- trouble finishing homework
- blurting out answers without hearing the whole question or raising their hand
- always seems on the go
- interrupts others, has trouble taking turns
- squirm in their seats, fidget with pencils, touches everything
- daydreams, easily confused

As a parent, you will be your child's coach and advocate. Because of the challenges that your child faces, he/she will require extra help to be successful in school and life. Without proper evaluation and treatment, these children may fall behind in schoolwork and may experience disappointments in trying to make and maintain friendships. Actively providing structure in the form of stated expectations and predictable schedules and consequences will help to reduce the stress on you and your child.

Sometimes children with ADHD have other disorders as well, such as specific learning disabilities or defiant, stubborn, non-compliant behaviors. When the child experiences failed friendships and consistent criticism for

failed school performance, he may experience anxiety or depression alongside the ADHD.

There are some children who have bipolar disorder and ADHD, but the precise number is not known. Telling the difference between the two disorders is difficult, but usually children with bipolar disorder show a "high" mood and are grandiose in their speech.

What Treatments are Available?

No single treatment is the answer for every child. Each child's needs and personal history, as well as parent's preference, must be carefully considered. Medications have been clearly shown to be of benefit in improving attention, focus, goal-directed behavior and organizational skills. The stimulant drugs, amphetamine and methylphenidate, are very useful, and when used with medical supervision, are considered quite safe. Sometimes the non-stimulants are used such as atomoxetine (Strattera), Clonidine and others.

Medications help many children focus and be more successful at school, home and play. Avoiding negative experiences now may help to prevent other emotional problems later.

Behavioral therapy, sometimes known as social skills training can help a child learn to attend to the expressions and behaviors of others, correctly interpret them and lead to better control of aggression and improved social behavior. Cognitive-behavioral therapy can teach problem-solving skills, reduce negative thoughts and improve self-esteem. Parents can learn management skills that teach the child how to organize and complete tasks.

In the next newsletter, we will present practical tips on how to manage your child's behavior with less stress on you and the rest of the family.

We are interested in your feedback. Please take our brief survey to help us provide you with the most supportive information possible.
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