

# ADHD and Children

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If you are concerned about whether your child is experiencing symptoms of ADHD, fill out the ADHD Symptom Questionnaire at the back of this pamphlet and talk with your child's doctor.

## Learn About ADHD

Many children have times when they fail to pay attention or when they act hyperactive or impulsive.

However, when a child has symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, or impulsivity that are more frequent and severe than for other children, he or she may have Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

If you are the parent of a child with ADHD, you're **not alone**. ADHD affects the lives of approximately 5.4 million children and adolescents.\* Fortunately, ADHD can be treated and managed. The more steps you take toward understanding ADHD, the better you can develop a plan to help your child manage it.

**FAST FACT:** It is estimated that 60% to 85% of children with ADHD may continue to meet criteria for the disorder during their teenage years. Nearly 50% of children continue to have ADHD in adulthood.

\*In 2007, an estimated 9.5% or 5.4 million school-aged children were reported by their parents to have ever been diagnosed with ADHD.

# What Is ADHD?

**ADHD stands for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.** ADHD is a neurobehavioral disorder that affects children, adolescents, and adults, and is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity.

**ADHD is a real disorder.** ADHD is the most commonly diagnosed neurobehavioral disorder in children, but also often affects adolescents and adults. When people think of ADHD, the image of a child who can't sit still commonly comes to mind, but ADHD symptoms may look different in different children. It is important to involve a trained health care provider in the diagnosis and management of ADHD.

## Signs & Symptoms of ADHD

The core symptoms of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. If you're concerned whether your child has symptoms of ADHD, start by talking to your child's doctor about the symptoms below:

### Inattention

- Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
- Has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
- Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish work
- Has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort
- Loses things necessary for tasks or activities
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities

## Hyperactivity

- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
- Leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected
- Runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescents or adults, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness)
- Has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly
- Is “on the go” or acts as if “driven by a motor”
- Talks excessively

## Impulsivity

- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Has difficulty awaiting turn
- Interrupts or intrudes on others

**This is not a diagnostic tool. These symptoms are not the only criteria for diagnosing ADHD. Only a trained health professional can diagnose ADHD.**

**FAST FACT:** ADHD is more commonly diagnosed in boys than in girls. One reason why many girls with ADHD may go undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed is that their symptoms may be more subtle than those in boys.

## How Is ADHD Diagnosed?

Only a doctor or trained health care professional can diagnose ADHD. No single test can determine whether a child has ADHD. Because ADHD may vary from person to person, a licensed health care professional will make a diagnosis based on information from you and an assessment of your child.

### For a diagnosis to be made:

- At least 6 of the 9 symptoms of inattention and/or 6 of the 9 symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity appear for at least 6 months to an extent that is not consistent with one's peers,
- Symptoms must be present in at least 2 settings, for example, at home, in social situations, or at school,
- Symptoms significantly impair functioning in at least 2 settings (eg, at school, at home, or in social settings),
- Some symptoms initially appeared before the age of 7 (past school reports may hold clues to an ADHD diagnosis), or
- Symptoms cannot be better accounted for by another disorder.

Take a look at the Signs and Symptoms of ADHD on pages 3 and 4 of this brochure to see a list of the core symptoms of ADHD.



## There are 3 subtypes of ADHD.

Some people may experience more of the inattentive symptoms of ADHD, whereas others may experience more of its hyperactive and impulsive symptoms.

### 1 ADHD, Inattentive Type:

When a person experiences 6 or more symptoms of inattention for at least 6 months. Fewer than 6 of the hyperactive/impulsive symptoms of ADHD may be present.

### 2 ADHD, Hyperactive/Impulsive Type:

When a person experiences 6 or more symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity for at least 6 months. Fewer than 6 of the inattentive symptoms of ADHD may be present.

### 3 ADHD, Combined Type:

When a person experiences 6 or more symptoms of inattention and 6 or more hyperactive/impulsive symptoms of ADHD for at least 6 months.

Most children with ADHD have **combined type** ADHD.

If you are concerned about whether your child has symptoms of ADHD, start by talking to your child's doctor.

# ADHD: Not Just a Childhood Disorder

**ADHD is usually diagnosed in childhood, but the symptoms often continue through adolescence and into adulthood.**

Children, teens, and adults often share the same symptoms of ADHD, but symptoms may appear differently over time.

ADHD symptoms may show differently in adults than in children. As a child with ADHD matures into adolescence and adulthood, symptoms such as overt hyperactivity may lessen.

If you are concerned about whether your child has symptoms of ADHD, start by talking to your child's doctor. Here are a few examples of how the symptoms of ADHD may differ for children, teens, and adults:

ADHD Symptoms	Children With ADHD	Teens With ADHD	Adults With ADHD
Inattention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be easily distracted, have difficulty following instructions or completing schoolwork, and have trouble listening</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May lose things such as homework and schoolwork, make careless mistakes, be disorganized, and fail to complete tasks at home or in school assignments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May put things off until the last minute, fail to follow through on commitments, and have difficulty sustaining attention to reading or paperwork</li></ul>
Hyperactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May climb or run excessively and have trouble remaining seated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May have difficulty engaging in quiet activities, fidget with hands or feet, and feel restless</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be impatient, feel restless, or may always need to be busy after school, work, or while on vacation</li></ul>
Impulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May find it hard to wait their turn when playing with friends, or may blurt out answers in school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be impatient and frequently interrupt or intrude on others to the point of causing difficulties in social and academic settings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May frequently interrupt others during college classes or at work, have difficulty waiting their turn, and finish others' sentences during conversations</li></ul>





**FAST FACT:** In some cases, ADHD may not be diagnosed until the teen or adult years, especially for those who have mainly inattentive symptoms.

## Is It ADHD or Typical Childhood Behavior?

ADHD-related behaviors may resemble the actions of children without ADHD. But the difference is that ADHD symptoms are more extreme and are likely to continue after they have diminished in children who don't have ADHD.

Take a look at some examples of how typical childhood behavior is different from symptoms of ADHD:

Typical Child Behavior Versus ADHD Symptoms	
Child Without ADHD	Child With ADHD
May forget to finish school assignments once or twice a month	May forget to do school assignments several times a week, or even every day
May change his/her mind several times about going on a family outing	May change his/her mind on many things, often every day
Loses his/her jacket	Loses his/her jacket, in the same week as losing his/her bookbag, library book, and other items
Has an argument with a friend	Gets into frequent arguments and may not have many friends

If you are concerned about whether your child is experiencing symptoms of ADHD, fill out the **Symptom Questionnaire** at the back of this pamphlet and talk to your child's doctor.



## ADHD Symptoms May Affect Children in Different Life Settings

ADHD symptoms can impact children at home, at school, and in social situations. For a diagnosis of ADHD to be made, symptoms must be present in at least 2 life settings and cause significant impairment in functioning in these settings.

Here are examples of how ADHD may affect children in different life settings:

		
At School	At Home	In Social Situations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having trouble getting organized</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failing to finish homework or chores</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Often having difficulty waiting turn</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being easily distracted</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Often losing things like school assignments or books</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequently interrupting or intruding on others</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having trouble sitting still</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having trouble engaging in leisure activities quietly</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talking excessively</li></ul>

This is not a diagnostic tool. These symptoms are not the only criteria for diagnosing ADHD. Only a trained health professional can diagnose ADHD.





## What Causes ADHD?

The exact cause of ADHD is unknown; however, a number of factors seem to contribute to the development of ADHD, including the following:

### Genetics

Research suggests that ADHD tends to run in families. However, this does not mean that all children in a family will have the disorder. It is not uncommon for an adult to seek help for ADHD symptoms after one of their children is diagnosed with ADHD.

### Environment

Certain external factors, such as smoking during pregnancy or complications from pregnancy, delivery, or infancy, may contribute to ADHD.

### Neurotransmitter Function

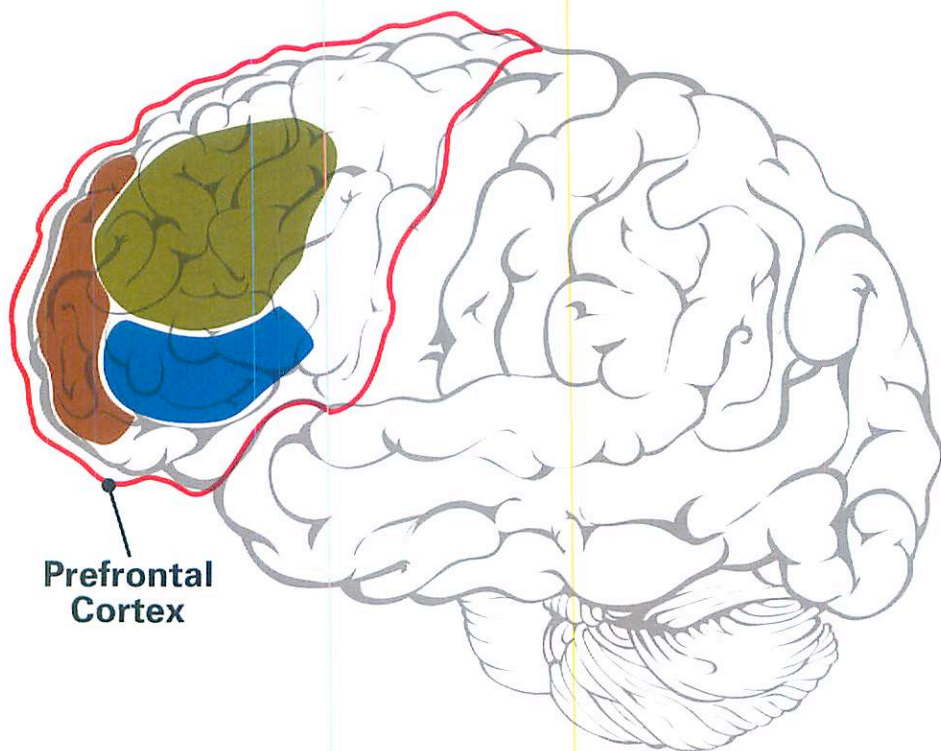
The brain uses various chemicals called neurotransmitters to help send messages across the nervous system. Research suggests that ADHD may be caused by an imbalance of neurotransmitters that may result in the inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms of ADHD.

Write down your questions about ADHD and take them with you to your child's next appointment with a doctor or other health care professional.

## What Parts of the Brain May Be Affected?

We do not know exactly why people develop ADHD. It may be related to problems with a part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex. The picture below shows the different parts of the prefrontal cortex that control attention, behavior, and judgment. Certain regions of the prefrontal cortex may not function properly in people with ADHD.

If the areas of the prefrontal cortex shown in green, blue, or brown are impaired, a person may have symptoms such as inattention or distraction, impulsive or hyperactive behavior, and/or inappropriate behavior.





## Preparing for Your Child's Doctor's Appointment

There are important items to consider as you prepare for your child's initial appointment with a doctor or other health care professional. To determine whether your child could have ADHD, the appointment may include the following:

1. An interview with you and your child to discuss specific symptoms that your child may be experiencing and how they impact your child in different settings—at school, at home, and in social situations.
2. An ADHD Symptom Questionnaire or an ADHD rating scale.
3. Feedback from the people closest to your child—teachers, coaches, friends, and family members.
4. A review of your child's medical history and family history.

### ADHD Symptom Questionnaire

Complete the questionnaire on page 25 of this pamphlet. This can be a useful tool to bring to your child's doctor to help facilitate your discussion. This questionnaire is not meant to replace a consultation with a trained health care professional. An accurate diagnosis can only be made through a clinical evaluation.

### After an ADHD Diagnosis

If your child is diagnosed with ADHD, the doctor will determine a treatment plan. Regular follow-up appointments are important because they allow your child's doctor to assess progress and symptoms, review treatment options and side effects, and adjust medication regimens and other components of his or her total treatment plan if necessary.







## Comprehensive Treatment Plan for ADHD

A **total treatment plan** should be developed with your child's doctor following a diagnosis of ADHD. If your child's ADHD symptoms don't improve when following the plan, talk with your child's doctor about changes that may be able to help.

### Medication

Several medications have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat ADHD and have been shown to help improve symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

- Medicine may not be right for everyone. Talk with your child's doctor to determine if medication is appropriate to manage your child's ADHD symptoms.
- Although medication is not a cure, it may help reduce the symptoms of ADHD.
- Your child's doctor can work with you to find out which ADHD medication may work best for your child.
- It may take time to find the right medication (or combination of medications) and dose level.
- As with all medications, ADHD medications must be used properly.
- If your child's doctor prescribes medication as part of the management plan, it is important that it is taken exactly as prescribed.

**FAST FACT:** Among children with ADHD, more than half (66%) were reported as taking medication for the disorder.

## **Behavioral Therapy, Counseling, or Other Therapy**

Behavioral therapy is often recommended as part of a total ADHD treatment plan. Behavioral therapy may help shape your child's behavior and improve his or her ability to self-regulate his or her behavior. Other types of therapy may be helpful, such as counseling and family therapy.



## ADHD Coaching

ADHD coaches can provide your child with support, structure, and accountability for his or her actions, which may help your child better manage his or her ADHD symptoms. They can provide coaching in keeping track of things, establishing routines and good habits, managing time, increasing independence, and improving self-advocacy skills. Coaches may charge a fee or provide fee-based services to help with practical issues like getting organized.

## Lifestyle Modification and Other Resources

Children may also benefit from tutoring that might include teaching specific learning and study strategies. Simple organization techniques may also be helpful for children with ADHD. Some strategies include:

- Using folders for complete and incomplete school assignments
- Using a simple daily planner to record and remember chores
- Dedicating routine places for keeping schoolwork and supplies
- Developing a plan for completing homework

Elaborate systems may be more detailed but may become overwhelming for many children with ADHD.



## School Accommodations

Children with ADHD may qualify for extra support in school to help with issues such as poor organizational skills, incomplete work, or a failure to complete homework assignments. Children may be eligible for accommodations through the 504 Rehabilitation Act Plan or special education through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as part of the Individuals With Disability Education Act (IDEA).

School programs may provide adaptations for children with disabilities, such as ADHD, like preferred classroom seating, modifications to homework, or alternate locations for taking tests. Working with the guidance counselor at your child's school may help coordinate interventions among your child's teachers.

Page 23 of this pamphlet provides a list of useful resources to help your child along the way.

Talk with a doctor about developing a treatment plan that is right for your child.







## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurobehavioral condition that presents itself as a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity leading to impairment in multiple settings such as school, work, and social situations. People with ADHD have these symptoms more frequently and severely than is typical for their peers.

### Can ADHD be treated?

Yes. ADHD symptoms may be controlled with an effective treatment plan. Your child's treatment plan may consist of ADHD medication and/or behavioral therapy and lifestyle modifications.

### How often should my child's symptoms be reassessed?

Even if your child is currently being treated for ADHD, follow-up appointments several times a year will help your child's doctor assess his or her progress and adjust treatment accordingly.

### I think my child has ADHD. What do I do?

Talk to your child's doctor. Only a doctor can diagnose ADHD. Talk with a health care professional with experience diagnosing ADHD in children. A qualified health care professional can also help you determine an appropriate treatment and management plan that's right for your child.

## Recommended Resources

### Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)

PO Box 7557

Wilmington, DE 19803-9997

Phone: 1-800-939-1019

[www.add.org](http://www.add.org)

### Children and Adults With Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

8181 Professional Place, Suite 150

Landover, MD 20785

Phone: 1-800-233-4050

[www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)

### ADHD Coaches Organization (ACO)

701 Hunting Place

Baltimore, MD 21229

Phone: 1-888-638-3999

[www.adhdcoaches.org](http://www.adhdcoaches.org)

Remember, only a trained health care professional can accurately diagnose ADHD.





# ADHD Symptom Questionnaire\*

## Symptoms of Inattention

	How Often	Affects My Child During		
	(never, sometimes, often)	School	Home	Social Settings
Careless mistakes/lack of attention to details				
Lack of sustained attention				
Poor listener				
Failure to follow through on tasks				
Poor organization				
Avoiding tasks requiring sustained mental effort				
Losing things				
Easily distracted				
Forgetful in daily activities				

## Symptoms of Hyperactivity

	How Often	Affects My Child During		
	(never, sometimes, often)	School	Home	Social Settings
Fidgeting/squirming				
Leaving seat				
Excessive running/climbing or restlessness				
Difficulty with quiet activities				
"On the go"				
Excessive talking				

## Symptoms of Impulsivity

	How Often	Affects My Child During		
	(never, sometimes, often)	School	Home	Social Settings
Blurting out answers				
Can't wait turn				
Intrusive				

\*Take your questionnaire with you to your child's appointment with the doctor.

**Please note: This symptom questionnaire does not replace a visit with a physician. Once you have completed the questionnaire, please consult a physician.**



# ADHD and Children

Keep this guide as a handy  
resource to help manage  
your child's ADHD.



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