

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Reference Guide



What is ADHD?

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a brain disorder characterized by a pervasive and persistent pattern of developmentally inappropriate inattention, hyperactivity or impulsivity which negatively impacts a person's daily life at home, at school and work.^{2,4} There are three types of ADHD with different symptoms: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive or combined in which the symptoms of the two types are equally present.³ ADHD begins in childhood and is estimated to affect 11 percent of school-aged children. In more than three quarters of cases, the symptoms can continue through adolescence into adulthood. Symptoms of ADHD can be mistaken for emotional or disciplinary problems or missed entirely leading to a delay in diagnosis.² Without proper identification and treatment, ADHD may have serious consequences, including school failure, family stress and disruption, depression, problems with relationships, substance abuse, delinquency, accidental injuries and job failure. Therefore, early identification and treatment of the disorder are extremely important.⁴

Symptoms

- Inattentive Presentation:
 - Overlooks details or makes careless mistakes
 - Problems sustaining attention in tasks or play
 - Does not appear to listen when spoken to directly
 - Struggles following through with instructions or finishing tasks
 - Has difficulty with organization
 - Avoids or dislikes tasks that require sustained mental effort
 - Loses things necessary for tasks or activities
 - Easily distracted by unrelated thoughts or stimuli
 - Forgetful in daily activities
- Hyperactivity and Impulsivity Presentation:
 - Fidgeting and squirming while seated
 - Had difficulty remaining seated
 - Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults
 - Being unable to play or engage in activities quietly
 - Being constantly in motion or "on the go," or acting as if "driven by a motor"
 - Excessive talking
- Blurring out an answer before a question has been completed or finishing other people's sentences
 - Struggles with waiting or taking turns
 - Interrupts or intrudes on others⁵

Diagnosis and Screening Tools

- There is no single screening tool or test to diagnose ADHD. Diagnosis requires a comprehensive evaluation to rule out other causes and to determine the absence or presence of co-existing conditions. Evaluations should include a careful history and a clinical assessment of the individual's academic, social, emotional functioning and developmental level. Information can be gathered from multiple sources such as parents and/or guardians, teachers, family members, friends and other clinicians using checklists, behavior questionnaires or rating scales. Use of the DSM-V diagnostic criteria for ADHD is necessary.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality created a timeline that can be used to help list the steps needed in an ADHD evaluation. The Vanderbilt Assessment Scale is a useful tool that can be used to help gather information from parents and teachers for an evaluation.
- Other useful ADHD Rating Scales and Checklists include:
 - Parent-completed Child Behavior Checklist
 - Teacher Report Form (TRF) of the Child Behavior Checklist
 - Conners Parent and Teacher Rating Scales
 - ADD-H: Comprehensive Teacher Rating Scale (ACTeRS)
 - Barkley Home Situations Questionnaire (HSQ)
 - Barkley School Situations Questionnaire (SSQ)
 - Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS v1.1)⁴

Interventions

- There are many treatment options for ADHD which can include behavior therapy, parent training, education, medications and school accommodations and interventions. For children under 6 years of age, behavior therapy is recommended as the first line of treatment before medications are tried. For children over 6 years of age, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends both behavior therapy and medication be taken together.¹ Adult treatment strategies can be similar to those used to treat children including medication, behavioral therapy, working with a coach and counseling.⁴

Resources

For additional information about ADHD, screening tools, interventions and resources, please visit:

- SuperiorHealthPlan.com
- NIMH.nih.gov
- CHADD.org
- NAMI.org
- CDC.gov
- ADD.org

References

1. “Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, www.cdc.gov/adhd/about/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/facts.html.
2. “Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).” *National Institute of Mental Health*, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml.
3. “Treating and Dealing with ADHD.” *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm269188.htm.
4. “Understanding ADHD: Overview.” *Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)*, www.chadd.org/for-professionals/overview/.
5. “Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: What You Need to Know.” *National Institute of Mental Health*, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd-the-basics/index.shtml.