

# What is ADHD?

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Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is an illness characterized by developmentally inappropriate impulsivity, inattention, and in some cases, hyperactivity. There are three different types of ADHD, each with different symptoms: predominately inattentive, predominately hyperactive/impulsive, and combined. The most commonly diagnosed behavior disorder in young persons, ADHD affects an estimate of 3% to 5% of school- aged children. Everyone has occasional difficulty sitting still, paying attention or controlling impulsive behavior. For some children and adults, however, the problem interferes with their daily lives at home, at school, at work and in social settings. People with ADHD can be very successful in life. But without appropriate identification and treatment, ADHD can have serious consequences, including school failure, depression, conduct disorder, failed relationships and substance abuse. Therefore early identification and treatment are extremely important.

## Symptoms to look for:

### Symptoms in Adults

- Poor attention, excessive distractibility
- Physical restlessness or hyperactivity
- Excessive impulsivity, saying or doing things without thinking
- Excessive and chronic procrastination
- Difficulty getting started on tasks
- Difficulty completing tasks
- Frequently losing things
- Poor organization, planning and time management skills
- Excessive forgetfulness



## Symptoms in Children and Adolescents

- Fails to give close attention to detail or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through on instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities
- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs around or climbs excessively
- Has difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as if driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Has difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

## Best Practices

Interventions for the treatment of ADHD falls into two main categories: Pharmacological and psychosocial. Psychosocial interventions such as behavioral therapy, teaching social skills, parent/child education about ADHD and appropriate school programming can be useful. Pharmacological management most often includes, prescribing stimulants and non-stimulants. A follow-up appointment should be scheduled within 30 days of initiating a prescription to treat ADHD in a child. Then two follow-up appointments should be scheduled in the following nine months to ensure efficacy of the medication.

## Screening Tools/Resources

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### Screening Tools:

Adult and child ADHD symptom checklists

Conners Rating Scales (for children/adolescents)

Vanderbilt Assessment Scales

Wender Utah Rating Scale (for adults)

### Resources:

#### **Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder**

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

#### **Attention Deficit Disorder Association**

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

#### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

[aap.org](http://aap.org)

#### **National Alliance of Mental Illness**

[nami.org](http://nami.org)



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