

Risk Factors

Many studies have found that the greatest risk factor for ADHD is being male. Males are three times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD as compared to females. Genetics and heredity are also major factors, as ADHD tends to run in families. Brain abnormalities or structural differences have also been found in individuals with ADHD.

Additional suspected factors include maternal use of cigarettes or alcohol during pregnancy which may affect brain development. Children who have been exposed to high levels of lead may also display ADHD symptoms.

Is ADHD a learning disability?

It is clear that having ADHD can affect your ability to learn in a highly stimulating environment such as a noisy classroom due to the amount of auditory and visual distractions. However, ADHD is not a learning disability. If your child functions at least one and a half to two years below grade level as a result of ADHD, the same criteria for services for children with learning disabilities can apply to your child as well (meaning they are eligible for special services under IDEA). One reason why people think that ADHD is a learning disability is because so many children and adults have a learning disability along with ADHD.

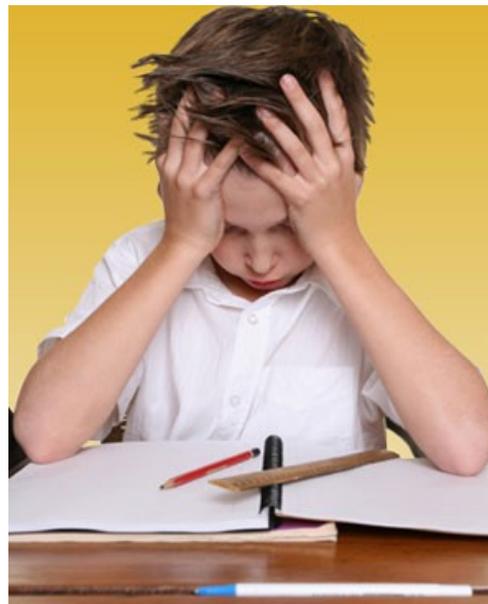
Treatment

ADHD can affect many areas in your child's life:

- Self-esteem
- Academic skills
- Family relationships
- Social relationships

The treatment needs to be as broad as the effect and can include:

- Psycho-Education
- Medication
- Behavioral therapies (social skills, organization and/or time management)
- Family therapy
- Individual therapy
- Sensory-motor integration



When Your Child has ADD/ADHD



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What is ADD/ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a biological, brain-based condition that is characterized by poor attention and distractibility and/or hyperactive and impulsive behaviors. It is one of the most common mental disorders that develop in children. It is estimated that between 3 and 5 percent of preschool and school age children have ADHD or approximately 2 million children in the United States. This means that in a class of 25- 30 students, it is likely that at least one student will have this condition.

ADHD begins in childhood but it often lasts into adulthood. Studies estimate that 30-70% of children with ADHD will continue to have symptoms into adolescence and adulthood.

What causes ADD/ADHD?

The exact cause of ADHD has not been determined, however the condition is thought to have genetic and biological component. ADHD tends to occur among family members. Many research studies currently focus on identifying which genes or combination of genes, may cause a person to be more susceptible to ADHD. Physical differences in parts of the brain are also thought to be linked to ADHD.

ADHD is not usually caused by:

- Too much television
- Food allergies
- Excess sugar
- Poor home life
- Poor schools

Other research shows that genetic influences may play a factor. Children who have ADHD usually have at least one close relative who also has ADHD. And at least one-third of all fathers who had ADHD in their youth bear children who have ADHD. Even more convincing: the majority of identical twins share the trait.

How can you diagnose ADD/ADHD?

A child with ADHD usually shows symptoms of the problem even before he or she enters preschool. Diagnosing ADHD should be left to a professional. The family doctor can be a good start. Some doctors may recommend you go to a specialist. These specialists – a child psychiatrist, psychologist or neurologist – can all diagnose ADHD. Child psychiatrists have the ability to provide therapy and provide any medications that your child may need. A child psychologist may be limited to providing therapy sessions. A neurologist can prescribe medications but is not qualified to deal with the emotional conditions.

First the specialist would gather information so he or she can rule out other possible reasons for your child's behavior. A child can have ADHD symptoms if an extremely stressful event occurred in the family. Undetected seizures, middle ear infections, medical disorders that may have affected the brain, learning disabilities and anxiety or depression may also be ADHD symptoms. Then they will gather information on the child's behavior to compare to the ADD/ADHD checklist. The child may be given tests to see if they have a learning disorder. After a long evaluation, ADHD can either be diagnosed or ruled out.

There are two major subtypes ADD (with hyper activity) and ADHD without hyperactivity (impulsive and inattentive form).

ADHD – Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity – is often easier to diagnose as these children move continuously, have trouble sitting still, have poor impulse control and may have temper outbursts more frequently than their peers.

ADHD – Inattentive type – is often misdiagnosed. These children:

- May be withdrawn or “spaced out” (may be more prevalent in girls)
- May be poor academic achievers
- May occur concurrently with Learning Disabilities
- May demonstrate excessive anxiety or shyness

Researchers know that ADHD can be concurrent with Learning Disabilities. Current research suggests anywhere from 25-50% of the people diagnosed with ADHD also have Learning Disabilities.

What's the difference between ADD and ADHD?

Wondering what the difference between ADD and ADHD is? ADD or attention deficit disorder is a general term frequently used to describe individuals that have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder without the hyperactive and impulsive behaviors. The terms are often used interchangeably for both those who do and those who do not have symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsiveness.