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## **Is my child ADHD?**

### **What is ADHD?**

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most common behavioral disorder of childhood. The primary symptoms of ADHD are inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. A child who suffers from ADHD exhibits some of the following behaviors:

- **Has a short attention span**
- **Does not listen to what others are saying**
- **Does not remain on task**
- **Is easily frustrated**
- **Often acts before thinking**
- **Is hyperactive**
- **Cannot remain seated**
- **Interrupts others**
- **Is easily distracted**
- **Is unable to play activities quietly**
- **Talks excessively**
- **Has difficulty waiting his or her turn**

### **Affect of symptoms**

The symptoms of ADHD impact every aspect of your child's life. For instance, your child's grades may decline because of an inability to focus or an inability to complete assignments. Your child may also have problems with peers because of an inability to play by the rules. Sometimes in peer interactions, your child may become aggressive.

In the most severe cases, a parent of an ADHD child may feel overwhelmed by the child's disruptive behavior. You may ask questions such as "*What's wrong with him?*" or "*Why can't she just sit down?*" or "*Why do I have to tell him over and over to do something?*" Your level of frustration may lead you to yell at your child or physically punish your child for misbehaving. Because the ADHD child may require constant attention, you may be physically tired or exhausted.

The ADHD child can produce stress among all family members. The child may annoy siblings, by taking things that belong to another sibling, or by impulsively hitting the sibling for no apparent reason. When the ADHD child requires a lot of attention, other children in the family may feel neglected.

## Treatment of ADHD

If you think that your child may be suffering from ADHD, you should consult with your primary care physician (PCP), pediatrician, psychiatrist, or psychologist. Early recognition, assessment, and treatment of ADHD can improve your child's educational progress and social development.

Make sure that the provider is highly trained in the area of diagnosing and treating childhood disorders. The provider should administer tests which will help to diagnose the behavioral or psychological problem. Once a diagnosis is made, the medical doctor may prescribe medication to reduce your child's symptoms. Make sure to ask about the side effects, how the medication works, and how long will your child need to take the medication. As with any medical problem being treated, make sure to give the medication to your child as prescribed and to keep all follow-up appointments with the provider. In my practice, I'm often told by parents that they may not give their ADHD child medication on the weekends, or during school breaks, or during the summer. Such practice may not allow for the full benefit of the medication prescribed to reduce the symptoms of ADHD and to improve the child's life.

Medication along with counseling may be the best treatment to address the symptoms of ADHD. During counseling, the psychologist will teach your child skills to reduce the negative consequences of the disorder. For example, your child will:

- **Learn impulse control**
- **Learn to follow rules**
- **Learn to reduce aggressive behavior**
- **Learn techniques to stay on task**
- **Learn social skills to improve relationships with others**
- **Learn to control inappropriate behavior**
- **Increase self-esteem**

To assure that your child's behavioral or psychological problems are properly treated, you should ask that all providers, including the medical doctor and psychologist, consult with one another about their treatment method. Also remember to let your child's teacher know that your child is being treated for ADHD, because in some cases educational modifications will need to be made to improve your child's academic performance.

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