

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that makes it difficult for a child to control his or her behavior. ADHD occurs more often in boys than in girls and symptoms usually become more noticeable in preschool or early elementary school.

Some symptoms of ADHD must be present before age 12 and for at least six months before a clear diagnosis can be made.

**Symptoms include:**

- ▶ Appearing fidgety
- ▶ Difficulty staying seated or playing quietly
- ▶ Difficulty participating in tasks that require taking turns
- ▶ Excessive talking and blurting out answers to questions
- ▶ Moving from one task to another without finishing
- ▶ Difficulty organizing self
- ▶ Often misplacing needed items
- ▶ Difficulty paying attention to details
- ▶ Being easily distracted

Source: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V (DSM-V)

Showing some of these symptoms does not necessarily mean that a child has ADHD. Although children may show what appear to be symptoms of ADHD, some of the behaviors may be normal for their age or other factors may be affecting behavior.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

Parenting a child with ADHD can be challenging. It is important for you as a parent to understand the diagnosis in order to assist your child in coping with his or her ADHD. It is also important that you make time to care for yourself. Here are some resources if you feel that you need some help.

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

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

This resource center offers helpful information for parents on ADHD and other childhood issues. It also provides links to sites that offer information regarding medication, learning disorders, and other helpful information.

**American Academy of Pediatrics**

[aap.org/healthtopics/adhd.cfm](http://aap.org/healthtopics/adhd.cfm)

At this Web site, you can obtain information on the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD, along with tool kits and resources.

**Child Development and Parenting Information**

[childdevelopmentinfo.com](http://childdevelopmentinfo.com)

This Web site provides information regarding support organizations and other resources for ADHD.

**Children and Adults with ADHD**

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

This organization offers an ADHD support group, as well as information regarding ADHD.

**National Institute of Mental Health**

[nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml](http://nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml)

At this Web site, you can obtain a detailed booklet that describes ADHD and information on coping with the diagnosis. The information is available to download.

**One ADD Place**

[oneaddplace.com](http://oneaddplace.com)

This Web site offers information on ADHD and various treatment options, and it contains a resource library with related articles, papers, and references.

**Healthy Children**

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

Sponsored by American Academy of Pediatrics. Provides valuable information about variety of children's health topics.

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Department of Education

For more information and referrals for treatment [tuftshhealthplan.com](http://tuftshhealthplan.com) or call Member Services at the number on your Tufts Health Plan member ID card.

Your child's pediatrician can also be a helpful resource.

## Behavioral Health

# ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER



# IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS ADHD

Symptoms of ADHD—inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity—occur in most children from time to time. Deciding whether a child has ADHD involves comparing a child's behaviors and abilities with those of other children of his/ her age, and developing an understanding of the other factors that might be affecting those behaviors. You may be the first person to recognize that your child may have ADHD, or, in many cases, it may be a teacher who notices. To have a better understanding of behaviors typical of your child, it is often helpful to track his or her symptoms and behaviors for a period of time.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed guidelines for diagnosing ADHD. Keep in mind that there is no definitive test for ADHD. In most cases a clinical professional can identify ADHD based on their interactions with the child and what they learn about the child from you and others involved in the child's life.

If you believe your child may have ADHD, start by talking to your child's pediatrician about your concerns. If a clinical evaluation is needed, it may be performed by a pediatrician, neurologist, psychiatrist, or mental health clinician with experience in the treatment of ADHD. The professional will require input from you and other caregivers regarding your child's behavior and symptoms in multiple settings. The professional may also want to look at report cards and schoolwork, as well as information on developmental history.

If your child's symptoms are getting in the way of his or her academic performance, Massachusetts' Chapter 766 law allows you to request an evaluation by your child's school system to determine if educational assistance would be helpful. For further information, contact your local school system.

ADHD may produce enormous stress for children and families but can be effectively treated. The sooner a child with ADHD symptoms can be evaluated, diagnosed, and helped, the greater their chances are of getting through school successfully and feeling better about themselves.

Source: [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)

# TREATMENT OPTIONS

If your child has been diagnosed with ADHD, there are a number of treatment options for you to consider. You may want to consult with your child's pediatrician to help determine the most effective treatment for your child. The following are summaries of the main approaches.

## **BEHAVIOR THERAPY:**

Behavior therapy is a form of therapy taught to parents and caregivers and is effective in helping children with ADHD learn better control of their behavior. This form of therapy focuses on teaching parents and other caregivers specific behavior management techniques by learning better ways to work with the child and respond effectively to difficult behaviors. As a result, children learn better ways to control their behavior. As the child's primary caregivers, parents play a major role in behavior therapy.

## **MEDICATION:**

Many children are treated with medication which can help reduce hyperactivity and improve attention span and focus.

Most professionals recommend using both medication and behavior therapy to treat a child with ADHD.

## **PSYCHOTHERAPY:**

Psychotherapy or "talk therapy" can help children with ADHD feel better about themselves. It also can help the child cope with other problems they may be having, and help parents and families deal with the stress of having a child with ADHD.

Parenting a child with ADHD can be challenging. It is important for parents to take care of themselves. Parent training and support groups made up of other families who are dealing with ADHD can be very helpful. Learning stress-management techniques and seeking counseling for yourself can also be helpful. Taking care of yourself will also be helpful to your child.