

MENTAL HEALTH

ATTENTION DEFICIT/ HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER



TUFTS
Health Plan

momentum

WHAT IS ADHD?

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common behavioral problem in children. It is estimated that between 3 percent and 7 percent of children have ADHD, with symptoms usually becoming noticeable in preschool or early elementary school.

Some symptoms of ADHD must be present before age 7 and for at least six months to an unusual degree 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
- ▶ Misplacing needed items
- ▶ Difficulty attending to details

If your child shows any of these symptoms, it does not necessarily mean that he or she 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.

If You Think Your Child Has ADHD

You may be the first person to recognize symptoms of ADHD in your child, or a teacher or other care provider may bring symptoms to your attention.

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 brief period of time. You may refer to the enclosed ADHD Symptom Checklist for assistance in keeping track of your child's behaviors.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed guidelines for diagnosing ADHD. Keep in mind that there is no single test for ADHD. A clinical evaluation is needed to make a diagnosis.

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. This is where the ADHD Symptom Checklist can be useful. 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' 766 law allows you to request an evaluation by your child's school system. For further information, contact your local school system. For helpful information, you may also go to www.clcm.org/special_ed.htm.

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 three main approaches.

1 Psychopharmacology

Treatment with medication is the most common method of treating ADHD. Medication can help reduce hyperactivity and improve attention span and focus. It can also help your child ignore distractions. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, studies show that about 80 percent of children treated with medication show significant improvement.

2 Behavioral approach

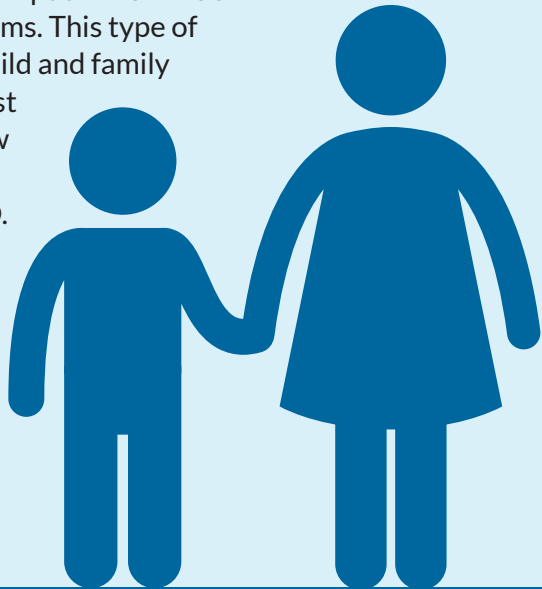
Behavioral therapy helps by changing your child's ways of thinking, as well as his or her coping skills, potentially leading to overall changes in behavior. An example of a simple intervention that works to modify behavior is developing a set schedule to form a routine for your child.

The support for such behavioral changes needs to come from each of your child's caregivers, and, most important, from you as the primary caregiver. To assist your child in changing a routine, it is important to organize his or her environment and to keep track of schoolwork. Keep in mind that praising good behavior will reinforce positive results.

For helpful information on behavioral approaches, contact the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-872-5327. You may also visit the following Web site, ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml. Just search for Identifying and Treating Attention Deficit Disorder.

3 Psychotherapy

While psychotherapy does not directly address the symptoms and underlying causes of ADHD, it may help children with ADHD accept themselves and cope with their symptoms. This type of therapy involves the child and family working with a therapist to help understand how they can change or better deal with ADHD.



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

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

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

Child Development and Parenting Information childdevelopmentinfo.com

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

Children and Adults with ADHD chadd.org

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

Institute of Mental Health

nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhd.cfm#readNow

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

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

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



If you need assistance locating a participating Tufts Health Plan provider, please contact the Tufts Health Plan Mental Health Department at 1-800-208-9565 Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mental Health Department

1-800-208-9565

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