

Children with ADHD

Children with ADHD show signs of inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity in specific ways. These children:

- Are in constant motion
- Squirm and fidget
- Do not seem to listen
- Have trouble playing quietly
- Often talk excessively
- Interrupt or intrude on others
- Are easily distracted
- Do not finish tasks

ADHD in Children

How Is ADHD Diagnosed?

Though your child may have some symptoms that seem like ADHD, it might be something else. That's why you need a doctor to check it out.

There is no test for ADHD. Instead, diagnosing is a process that takes several steps and involves gathering a lot of information from multiple sources. You, your child, your child's school, and other caregivers should be involved in assessing your child's behavior. They will also ask what symptoms your child has, how long ago those symptoms started, and how the behavior affects your child and the rest of your family. Doctors diagnose ADHD in children after a child has shown six or more specific symptoms of inattention or hyperactivity on a regular basis for more than 6 months in more than two settings. The doctor will consider how a child's behavior compares with that of other children the same age.

A doctor will give your child a physical exam, take a medical history, and may even give him a noninvasive brain scan.

Your child's primary care doctor can determine whether your child has ADHD using standard guidelines developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which says the condition may be diagnosed in children ages 4 to 18.

It is very difficult to diagnose ADHD in children younger than 5. That's because many preschool children have some of the symptoms seen in ADHD in various situations. Also, children change very rapidly during the preschool years.

In some cases, behavior that looks like ADHD might be caused instead by:

- A sudden life change (such as divorce, a death in the family, or moving)
- Undetected seizures
- Medical disorders affecting brain function
- Anxiety
- Depression

3 Types of ADHD in Children

Doctors may classify symptoms as the following types of ADHD:

- **Combined type (inattentive/hyperactive/impulsive).** Children with this type of ADHD show all three symptoms. This is the most common form of ADHD.
- **Hyperactive/impulsive type.** Children show both hyperactive and impulsive behavior, but for the most part, they are able to pay attention.
- **Inattentive type.** Formerly called attention deficit disorder (ADD). These children are not overly

active. They do not disrupt the classroom or other activities, so their symptoms might not be noticed.

ADHD Treatment Overview

Treatment plans may include special education programs, psychological intervention, and drug treatment. Learn as much as you can about the options and talk them over with your child's health care provider so you can make the best plan for your child.

Studies show that long-term treatment with a combination of medications and behavioral therapy is much better than just medication treatment, or no specific treatments in managing hyperactivity, impulsivity, inattention, and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Those kids treated with both ADHD drugs and therapy also had better social skills.

Drugs for Childhood ADHD

A class of drugs called psychostimulants (or sometimes just stimulants), is a highly effective treatment for childhood ADHD. These medicines, including Adderall, Concerta, Daytrana, Ritalin, and Quillivant XR, help children to focus their thoughts and ignore distractions.

Another treatment used to treat ADHD in kids is nonstimulant medication. These medications include Intuniv, Kapvay, and Strattera.

ADHD medicines are available in short-acting (immediate-release), intermediate-acting, and long-acting forms. It may take some time for a doctor to find the best medication, dosage, and schedule for someone with ADHD. ADHD drugs sometimes have side effects, but these tend to happen early in treatment. Usually, side effects are mild and don't last long.

Behavioral Treatments for Children With ADHD

Behavioral treatment for children with ADHD includes creating more structure, encouraging routines, and clearly stating expectations of the child.

Other forms of ADHD treatment that may benefit the child include:

- **Social skills training.** This can help a child with ADHD learn behaviors that will help them develop and maintain social relationships.
- **Support groups and parenting skills training.** This includes support for the parents and helping them learn more about ADHD and how to parent a child who has ADHD.

What Treatment Is Best for My Child?

No single treatment is the answer for every child with ADHD. Each child's needs and personal history must be carefully considered.

For example, a child may have undesirable side effects to a medication, making a particular treatment unacceptable. If a child with ADHD also has anxiety or depression, a treatment combining medication and behavioral therapy might be best.

It's important to work with a doctor to find the best solution for your child.

The ADHD Coach

Coaching is a relatively new field in the treatment of ADHD in children. ADHD coaches are meant to help children achieve better results in different areas of their lives by setting goals and helping the child find ways to reach them. A child, however, must be mature and motivated enough to work with a coach.