

ADHD – Common Behaviors and Symptoms

At one time or another, almost all children seem to show symptoms of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is normal for all children to show some of these symptoms from time to time. Your child may be reacting to stress at school or home. She may be bored or going through a difficult stage of life. It does not mean she has ADHD.

True ADHD symptoms appear on a regular basis and can interfere with learning. That is why a teacher sometimes is the first to notice inattention, hyperactivity and/or impulsivity and bring these symptoms to the parents' attention. Or perhaps questions from your pediatrician raised the issue. At routine visits, pediatricians often ask questions such as the following:

- How is your child doing in school?
- Are there any problems with learning that you or your child's teachers have seen?
- Is your child happy in school?
- Is your child having problems completing class work or homework?
- Are you concerned with any behavior problems in school, at home or when your child is playing with friends?

Your answers to these questions may lead to further evaluation for ADHD.

Part of any evaluation is identifying behavior symptoms. ADHD includes three behavior symptoms: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Table 1 explains these symptoms.

Table 1. Symptoms of ADHD

| Symptom | How a child with this symptom may behave |
|---------------|---|
| Inattention | Has a hard time paying attention, daydreams |
| | Does not seem to listen |
| | Is easily distracted from work or play |
| | Does not seem to care about details, makes careless mistakes |
| | Does not follow through on instructions or finish tasks |
| | Is disorganized |
| | Loses a lot of important things |
| | Forgets things |
| Hyperactivity | Does not want to do things that require ongoing mental effort |
| | Is in constant motion, as if "driven by a motor?" |
| | Cannot stay seated |
| | Squirms and fidgets |

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|-------------|---|
| | Talks too much |
| | Runs, jumps and climbs when this is not permitted |
| | Cannot play quietly |
| Impulsivity | Acts and speaks without thinking |
| | May run into the street without looking for traffic first |
| | Has trouble taking turns |
| | Cannot wait for things |
| | Calls out answers before the question is complete |
| | Interrupts others |

Children with ADHD may have one or more of the symptom groups listed in Table 1. The symptoms usually are classified as the following types of ADHD:

- **Inattentive Only** (formerly known as attention deficit disorder [ADD]) — Children with this form of ADHD are not overly active. Because they do not disrupt the classroom or other activities, their symptoms may not be noticed. Among girls with ADHD, this form is most common.
- **Hyperactive/Impulsive** — Children with this type of ADHD show both hyperactive and impulsive behavior, but can pay attention.
- **Combined Inattentive/Hyperactive/Impulsive** — Children with this type of ADHD show all three symptoms. This is the most common type of ADHD.

If your child is 6 years of age or older and has shown symptoms of ADHD on a regular basis for more than 6 months, it is important to discuss this with your pediatrician. It is also very important that you pay close attention to safety. A child with ADHD may not always be aware of dangers and can get hurt easily. Be especially careful around the following:

- Traffic
- Firearms
- Swimming pools
- Tools such as lawn mowers
- Poisonous chemicals, cleaning supplies or medicines

Excerpted from "*Understanding ADHD*" from the American Academy of Pediatrics.