



ProjectTEACH

Your Child's Mental Health: What to Know About ADHD



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood disorders. It affects as many as 1 in 20 school-aged children. Kids with ADHD have challenges with *inattention*, *impulsivity*, and *hyperactivity* due to differences in how their brains are wired. Everyone struggles with these things from time to time, but for kids with ADHD, it can interfere with daily life including at school, at home, and in friendships.

There are 3 types of ADHD:

- **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** This is specific to challenges with hyperactivity and impulsivity (can't sit still, make hasty decisions).
- **Predominantly Inattentive Presentation:** This is specific to paying attention. It's sometimes referred to as "ADD" (attention deficit disorder) even though this term does not exist as an actual diagnosis.
- **Combined Presentation:** This includes challenges with both hyperactivity/impulsivity and paying attention. Most children with ADHD fall in this category.

ADHD affects an important group of skills called executive functions, which help us to focus, organize, and remember what we were asked to do. Kids with ADHD struggle with key areas of executive function that affect focus, impulse control, and other skills.

INATTENTIVE SYMPTOMS

- Makes careless mistakes/lacks attention to detail
- Can't stay focused in school or play activities
- Doesn't listen when being spoken to
- Can't follow through on instructions and doesn't finish tasks
- Can't organize tasks or assignments
- Avoids or dislikes tasks that aren't interesting or require continual effort
- Is easily distracted
- Is frequently forgetful

HYPERACTIVE/IMPULSIVE SYMPTOMS

- Is fidgety
- Can't stay seated in activities where it's expected
- Runs around when the behavior is not appropriate
- Can't play quietly
- Is often on the go or "driven by a motor"
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers inappropriately
- Can't wait their turn
- Frequently interrupts others

What Should I Do If I Think My Child Has ADHD?

If you notice your child struggling with any of the behaviors above, talk to your pediatrician about what you have seen. A simple, "I've noticed some changes in my child's behavior that don't seem typical for him/her," can start the conversation. Your pediatrician can help you figure out if there's cause for concern. If there is, they may refer you to a specialist, like a psychiatrist or a psychologist, who can better assess the ADHD and any other learning or mental health concerns.

How is ADHD Treated?

There are many good treatments for ADHD. Experts agree that medication is the most helpful treatment for most kids, but many do best with a combination of treatments. Other treatments include behavior therapy, which helps to change distracting behaviors into more helpful ones, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), which help kids to think about their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and social skills groups, which help kids learn and practice skills that are important for interacting with others.

Remember, you know your child best. So, if you notice something different in your child's behavior, it's completely normal to have concerns. Take that opportunity to learn more by talking to your pediatrician or another trusted health care provider.

To learn more about mental health concerns by child age group,
visit the Project TEACH Parent and Family Page: bit.ly/PTEACH-Family

To learn more about ADHD, visit the NY Office of Mental Health website: bit.ly/OMH-ADHD