

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

All children appear hyperactive, inattentive, and impulsive at times; however, compared to other children of a similar developmental age, these symptoms are more frequent and severe in children with ADHD negatively impacting academic progress, self-esteem, social interactions, and parent / child relationships. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, ADHD affects approximately 3-5% of school-age children.

What to Look for:

ADHD symptoms often vary in different children and across different settings. These symptoms must occur early in a child's life, before age seven, and negatively impact functioning in multiple areas. Look for...

- Short attention span
- Easily distracted
- Fidgety or restless
- Difficulty listening or following directions
- Inability to remain still / always "on the go"
- Poor impulse control
- Forgetful
- Makes careless mistakes
- Poor organizational skills
- Impatience
- Talks excessively, often interrupting

Treatment Options:

Children with ADHD want to do well in school and in social interactions; however, their symptoms interfere with their efforts. With appropriate treatment, children with ADHD can learn to manage their symptoms and live successfully.

- Comprehensive evaluation to ensure accurate diagnosis as different illnesses often present with similar symptoms
- Individual therapy to help the child manage the symptoms and cope with negative academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal consequences
- Parent training to create an environment tailored to these children's unique challenges
- Medication to decrease symptoms
- School interventions set forth under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and Section 504 to implement classroom based accommodations to diminish symptoms hindering academic progress

Strategies for Parenting Children with ADHD

1. Establish a structured environment, trying to follow the same routine daily, to allow for predictability and consistency.
2. Post detailed lists of responsibilities from household chores to brushing teeth to enhance organizational skills.
3. Utilize several learning modalities inclusive of verbal, written, and pictures to aid memory.
4. Use concise and specific directions, breaking down tasks into simple step by step instructions.
5. Ask you child to repeat instructions to ensure understanding and focus.
6. Establish a calm and peaceful environment diminishing distractions such as television or radio, especially during homework times.
7. Allow your child frequent breaks.
8. Organize, establishing a place for everything to increase organization and decrease careless mistakes.
9. Establish clear, consist, and reasonable consequences for negative behaviors, even utilizing a behavior chart.
10. Provide positive reinforcement, focusing on encouraging effort and small positive steps.
11. Involve your child in establishing routines, activities, and rules, allowing them a sense of responsibility and control of their environment.
12. Allow your child independence while supervising in all necessary areas. Children with ADHD often lack self-control. You can be their external control to guide and teach them.
13. Involve your child in activities with peers to enhance social skills, encouraging interaction with one or two peers at a time if your child is easily stimulated.
14. Recognize your child's strengths and utilize them for growth
15. Advocate for your child to receive appropriate school and mental health services.