

# What Parents and Caregivers Should Know About Diagnosing and Managing ADHD

Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurobehavioral disorders diagnosed in children and often lasts into adulthood (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019). It is described as a persistent or ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that gets in the way of daily life or typical development. Symptoms can change presentation over the course of one's lifetime, and although ADHD is often diagnosed in childhood, it may also be diagnosed in adults.



Symptoms affect children and adults in varying degrees. Diagnosis depends on the presence of certain behavioral characteristics that create significant difficulty in at least two areas of life, such as home, social settings, school or work. For children and teenagers, the symptoms must be more frequent or severe compared to other children the same age. In adults, the symptoms must affect one's ability to function in daily life and persist from adolescence.

## Common symptoms of ADHD include:

- inattention
- impulsivity
- hyperactivity

If left untreated, ADHD may have serious consequences including difficulty succeeding at school or on the job, family strain, depression or anxiety, problems with relationships, substance use, delinquency and accidental injuries. When ADHD is identified and properly treated, individuals can better manage symptoms leading to productive and successful lives.

There is a broad range of professionals who work with individuals affected by ADHD. Physicians, psychologists, social workers, nurse practitioners, therapists and teachers all play a vital role in detecting, screening and treating ADHD. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) identifies three presentations of ADHD depending on the presence or absence of certain symptoms:

Predominantly Inattentive Presentation

Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Presentation

Combined Presentation

To be diagnosed with ADHD, children must have six or more of the nine characteristics and older teens or adults must have at least five of the nine characteristics in either or both of the DSM-5 categories.

Recognizing the signs of ADHD in your child is the first step toward a brighter, more manageable future. If you suspect your child has ADHD, reach out to your child's healthcare provider, educators and support groups as they can recommend next steps to ensure your child's unique needs are met. This can be things like helping control symptoms, identifying ways to cope with the condition, referring your child to additional services to build skills or improve overall psychological well-being, and learning how to manage social relationships. Your child's potential is limitless, and early intervention is key to unlocking it. Every step you take brings your child closer to being their best self and it starts with a simple but powerful choice: getting your child screened for ADHD.

## ***Act now and make a difference!***

To learn more about AAP recommendations for the treatment of ADHD, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's ADHD Treatment Recommendations web page: [ADHD Treatment Recommendations | CDC](#).

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