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Share the Wellness Tip

Helping the Whole Child

Diagnosing ADHD

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurobehavioral disorder characterized by a combination of inattentiveness, distractibility, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Five to seven percent of children are diagnosed with this developmental disorder.

Talk with your child's doctor if you suspect your child may have ADHD. Deciding if a child has ADHD is a several-step process. There is no single test to diagnose ADHD, and many other problems, like anxiety, depression, and certain types of learning disabilities, can have similar symptoms. To make a diagnosis, the doctor also will need to gather information about your child's behavior in different settings from teachers and others who know your child. The symptoms of ADHD fall into two distinct categories: inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity.

Symptoms of Inattention:

- difficulty sustaining attention, organizing tasks, or setting up tools needed for a task
- easily distracted by irrelevant sights and sounds
- does not pay attention to detail or follow instructions carefully
- makes careless mistakes in schoolwork or other activities
- fails to finish schoolwork or other chores
- loses things and is forgetful
- does not seem to listen when spoken to directly; lethargic, appears to be daydreaming

Symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity:

- restless, fidgeting with hand or feet or squirming while seated
- unable to stay seated or play quietly
- as small child, may run, jump, or climb about constantly
- talks excessively at inappropriate times
- blurts out answers before questions are completed
- has trouble taking turns or waiting on line
- interrupts or intrudes on others; grabs things from people

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is often treated successfully with medication. But parents can take other steps to help children cope with this condition.

Doctors don't know exactly what causes ADHD, which is more common in boys. ADHD is **not** caused by poor parenting, too much sugar, or vaccines. ADHD has biological origins that aren't yet clearly understood. No single cause has been identified, but researchers are exploring a number of possible genetic and environmental links. Studies have shown that many kids with ADHD have a close relative who also has the disorder.

Team Effort

Parents, teachers, and doctors can work together to manage ADHD problems. Measures that may help in addition to medication include:

- Dependable structure through simple rules/routines
- Counseling for learning and social problems
- A system of rewards for good behavior
- Specially tailored instruction and goals at school
- Yoga, which can help with concentration
- Massage to help reduce muscle tension

Sources: Kidshealth.org; *Psychology Today*

