



Child Builders

Houston's Advocates for Mental Health in Children

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

By Sonja L. Randle, M.D.

Parents are often overwhelmed when their child is identified as having behavioral problems in school because the child “won’t listen or pay attention to the teacher.” Any child may show inattention, impulsivity, or hyperactivity at times, but the child with Attention Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) shows these symptoms and behaviors more frequently and severely than other children of the same age or developmental level. According to the Surgeon’s Report on Mental Health, ADHD afflicts between 3 percent and 5 percent of school-age children in any six-month period. The disorder affects about three times more boys than girls. ADHD often persists into adolescence and adulthood and is frequently not diagnosed until later years. There are actually three different types of ADHD, each with different symptoms: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive/impulsive, and combined.

ADHD must occur before the age of seven and it can continue into adulthood. Although ADHD is one of the best-researched disorders in medicine, its cause nonetheless remains unknown. A great majority of the research suggests a neurobiological basis- an imbalance or deficiency in certain chemicals that regulate the efficiency with which the brain controls behavior. Twenty-five percent of biological parents also have this medical condition which supports the likelihood of a genetic linkage.

Treatment may reduce or eliminate troubling symptoms and improve the daily functioning of children and adolescents with ADHD. Medications reduce the symptoms of ADHD and are successful in 75 to 90 percent of cases. While ADHD cannot be cured, it can be effectively and safely treated. The American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend medication with behavioral therapy and behavior modification.

Parents that suspect their child might have ADHD should consult with a Child Psychiatrist for a comprehensive evaluation. A child with ADHD may have other comorbid conditions such as conduct disorder, anxiety disorder, depressive disorder, learning disorders, or manic-depressive disorder. With out proper treatment, the child may have long-term adverse effects across multiple settings: academic performance, vocational success, peer/family relations, and social- emotional development.

Characteristics of ADHD: symptoms arise in childhood with onset before age seven and evident for at least six months.

ADHD primarily inattentive type:

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through on instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities

ADHD primarily hyperactive/impulsive type:

- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs around or climbs excessively
- Has difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Has difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes on others

ADHD combined type:

- Meets both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive criteria

For additional information please contact: www.mentalhealth.org, www.aacap.org and www.chadd.org.

For further information and referral call:

Your child's school counselor

ChildBuilders (formerly known as HAMIC), founded in 1974, is a non-profit organization that provides innovative programs to educate parents, children, teachers and the community about the emotional well-being of children and their families. www.childbuilders.org ChildBuilders Community Education.

For further information & referral
call your child's school counselor

DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
ESCAPE Family Resource Center	713-942-9500
Harris County Psychiatric Center	713-741-5000
Jewish Family Service	713-667-9336
Mental Health Association	713-522-5161
MHMRA of Harris County	713-970-7070
NAMI Metro Houston	281-579-3750
United Way of Texas Gulf Coast	211 or 713-957-4357

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