

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a developmental and behavioral disorder in which a person has trouble paying attention and focusing on tasks. It may begin in early childhood and can continue into adulthood. Without treatment, ADHD can cause problems at home, school, work, and with relationships. ADHD was once called attention deficit disorder (ADD).

The symptoms of ADHD include inattention, impulsiveness (acting without thinking) and hyperactivity that are inappropriate for a person's age level.

Children who have ADHD often:

- Are easily distracted by sights and sounds in their environment.
- Are unable to concentrate for long periods of time on low stimulation tasks (homework vs. video games).
- Are restless and impulsive.
- Have a tendency to daydream.
- Are slow to complete tasks.

Adults who have ADHD often:

- Miss work deadlines.
- Miss appointments.
- Appear hectic and disorganized.
- Have significant problems prioritizing.

Symptoms of ADHD in adults and children vary by individual and range from mild to severe.

Cause of ADHD

The exact cause of ADHD is unknown. The theories state that there are changes in the brains of people with the ADHD. It is not caused by home or school situations or by poor parenting.

Diagnosis:

There is no single test used to diagnose ADHD. It is diagnosed after a child has shown some or all of symptoms of ADHD on a regular basis for more than 6 months. The diagnosis of ADHD involves the gathering of information from several sources, including school, caregivers and parents. A specialist in childhood development disorders will consider how a child's behavior compares with that of other children the same age. The specialist will also do a physical exam to look for any medical problems that may affect a child's behavior. ADHD in adults is diagnosed using a similar process.

Treatment:

Although there is no cure for ADHD, treatment can help control symptoms. There are several types of treatments available.

1. Stimulant Therapy
2. Nonstimulant Therapy
3. Antidepressant Therapy

Behavior Management

Learning behavior management techniques is considered to be an essential part of any successful ADHD treatment program. Most experts agree that combining medication treatments with extended behavior management is the most effective way to manage ADHD in children and adolescents.

In adults with ADHD, experts agree that a combination of medication and socialization training and/or behavior management can help most patients.