

### Childhood Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a disorder that affects behavior. A recent national study reported by the CDC noted that 11% of school aged children are being diagnosed with ADHD. Three main symptoms define ADHD including inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. The symptoms are severe enough to affect the child's behavior in social situations and at school. The criteria for ADHD diagnosis were established in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association) in 1994. To be diagnosed with ADHD, a child must exhibit the symptoms outlined below for at least six months. Typically professionals seek observational input from several sources of the child's behavior (teachers, parents, other good character witness such as a relative).

1. **Inattention** refers to the tendency to be easily distracted.
2. **Repeated, careless mistakes** are symptoms of inattention. Failure to pay attention to details results in errors at school, work, and in other areas.
3. A child who has inattention associated with ADHD may have **trouble paying attention** to the task at hand. Whether related to schoolwork or play, a child with inattention may become easily bored and have trouble focusing on an activity.
4. A child who has inattention with ADHD may have **difficulty listening** when being spoken to.
5. Another symptom of ADHD inattention is the **inability to complete tasks**. Children with ADHD may not complete homework or chores. This "failure to follow through" is not due to another cause such as oppositional behavior or an inability to understand instructions.
6. **Organization** is a skill that children with ADHD often struggle with. Disorganization makes it difficult for ADHD kids to complete tasks.
7. A child with ADHD may find it **difficult or impossible to participate** in tasks requiring continuous mental exertion. Schoolwork and homework that require focused effort may be challenging.
8. ADHD children **often lose objects**. Schoolwork, books, toys, tools, and pencils belonging to an ADHD child may go missing.
9. A child with ADHD may **have trouble ignoring outside stimulation** including lights, noise, and activity going on around them.
10. A child with ADHD **may forget things easily**.
11. **Hyperactivity** is a feature of ADHD that refers to an abundance of physical energy and too much activity.
12. ADHD children **may squirm** in their seat and have trouble sitting still. Fidgeting is another way hyperactivity manifests in ADHD children.
13. **Sitting may be intolerable** for ADHD children. They may get up out of their seat at school or at other times when there is an expectation to remain seated.
14. ADHD children **may run around or climb** on objects at inappropriate times.
15. **Quiet activities** such as reading or playing a board game **may be difficult** for an ADHD child to engage in.
16. ADHD children are often **non-stop talkative**.
17. **Impulsivity** is a defining feature of ADHD that refers to acting without regard to consequences. Read on to learn about symptoms of impulsivity.
18. A child with ADHD **may interrupt others** to answer a question before it's been asked.
19. ADHD children **have trouble taking turns**. They may find it difficult or unbearable to wait their turn while playing a game or doing other activities.
20. An ADHD child **may interrupt** the conversations and activities of others.

Please remember: Early diagnosis and treatment of ADHD increases the possibility of long-term success for children with the condition. It can be difficult to diagnose ADHD because many of the symptoms are considered "normal" in very young, non-ADHD children. Symptoms in these children eventually go away. The symptoms of ADHD also mimic those of other conditions. A thorough evaluation by a skilled health care professional is necessary to diagnose ADHD. A parent or teacher who suspects ADHD in a child should recommend that child for an evaluation right away.

### Solutions:

1. **Think positively.** An important part of helping a child with ADHD to overcome their challenges is to provide positive support and encouragement. Many children with
2. Here are some opportunities for recognizing and appreciating your child with ADHD:
  - Observe them with arts and crafts. Praise them as they work, or let them know you appreciate what they've created once they've finished.
  - When your children with ADHD help with chores, make sure to recognize their contribution. Let them know they are valued.
  - Many children with hyperactivity need a lot of exercise. Organized sports can be a great way for them to blow off steam, and sports also give you opportunities to recognize their talents.
3. **Define routines and schedules.** Children with ADHD often benefit from well-defined schedules and routines. Knowing what to expect helps the child manage daily tasks.
4. **Set clear-cut rules and expectations.** Be consistent: Clear-cut rules with reasonable expectations are important for children with ADHD. Write down the rules and post them if this is helpful. Children with ADHD often respond well to rewards and consequences. Make sure your child understands the rules that are set, and stick to them. When the child follows the rules, provide positive feedback and rewards. If the rules are not followed, there needs to be fair and consistent consequences.
5. **Helpful Phrases** and Instructions to the child: Make sure instructions are clear. Children with ADHD may have difficulty following vague requests. Instead of telling your child to "clean the mess," tell him to "make the bed and put your clothes in the closet." Instead of saying, "play nicely," ask your child to "give your friend a turn to play with the video game." Give step-by-step instructions for larger tasks. Stay calm and speak clearly, and make eye contact to keep your child focused on you. Ask your child to repeat instructions
6. **How to Discipline:** Make sure instructions are clear. Children with ADHD may have difficulty following vague requests. Instead of telling your child to "clean the mess," tell him to "make the bed and put your clothes in the closet." Instead of saying, "play nicely," ask your child to "give your friend a turn to play with the video game." Give step-by-step instructions for larger tasks. Stay calm and speak clearly, and make eye contact to keep your child focused on you. Ask your child to repeat instructions
7. **Using effective Time-outs:** One type of effective consequence for children with ADHD can be time-outs. These can be particularly useful for younger children and can remove the child with ADHD from the situation that may be stressful or over-stimulating. Time outs should be immediate (at the time of the behavior) and should last no longer in minutes than the child's age in years (for example, a 6-year-old should get a time out for no longer than 6 minutes).
8. **Ignore Negative ADHD behavior:** Often, children with ADHD may whine, nag, yell, or argue for attention. Ignoring these undesirable behaviors may be an effective consequence when done consistently. Another way to respond to these attention-seeking behaviors is telling children with ADHD in a calm and quiet tone that they will be listened to when they are calm and quiet themselves. If a child's behavior could injure themselves or others, this should not be ignored.
9. **Keep your Child Organized:** ADHD in children can manifest as having difficulty organizing tasks and belongings (also referred to as executive functioning skills). Doing

homework and performing in a classroom may be stressful for children with ADHD. Parents and teachers often find using color-coded binders and notebooks for each subject along with a checklist of homework for the day to be helpful. Having a second set of textbooks at home may help the child who forgets to bring books home. Create an organizing system for your child and help him or her follow it.

10. **Removing Distractions** for Children: Children with ADHD can easily become over-stimulated, so quiet spaces are important. There are many distractions at home from televisions, computers, video games, and siblings. If your child has ADHD, make sure to have a space free of distractions so they can complete homework assignments and other tasks.
11. **Set Small, Realistic Goals** to Assist Child to Manage Better: Set small, gradual, and attainable goals. It is unrealistic and stressful for a child to be expected to change overnight. Just as with losing weight you cannot expect to lose 25 pounds overnight and need small increments along the way, your child needs small steps to accomplish behaviors that are important.  
If you want your child to sit still when you go out to dinner, break up the meal into small, attainable segments such as not interrupting conversations for five minutes, then remaining seated for ten minutes. Offer praise and rewards for each goal met.
12. **Ways to Help your Child Shine:** All children are good at something. Children with ADHD are often criticized for their negative behaviors. That means their positive behaviors and accomplishments are often overlooked. Help your children with ADHD find out what they are good at, whether it's a sport, a musical instrument, a class at school, art, or any other activity. It doesn't matter what the hobby is having something they can be successful at and receive praise for will improve self-esteem.

### **Helpful Phrases for Praising Your Child**

Here are a few handy phrases you can use in recognizing the talents and capabilities of children with ADHD:

- "I am so proud of you!"
- "You set such a good example when you..."
- "You can do this."
- "I really enjoy how much you like to ask questions."
- "You're making great progress."
- "I believe in you."

<https://www.medicinenet.com/adhd>