



CHILDHOOD ADHD

ATTENTION-DEFICIT / HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

You may hear this condition called by various names; hyperactivity, minimal brain dysfunction, minimal brain damage and hyperkinetic syndrome. All of these terms describe a condition that affects a child's ability to concentrate, to learn and to maintain a normal level of activity.

Attention deficit disorder affects between 3 and 10 % of all children in America. Thought to be 10 times more common in boys than in girls, this disorder often develops before age 7 but is most often diagnosed when the child is between ages 8 and 10.

A child with ADHD:

- has difficulty finishing any activity that requires concentration at home, school or play; shifts from one activity to another
- doesn't seem to listen to anything said to him or her
- acts before thinking, is *excessively active* and runs or climbs nearly all the time, often is very restless even during sleep
- requires *close and constant supervision*, frequent calls out in class, and has serious difficulty waiting his or her turn in games or groups

In addition, children may have specific learning disabilities that can lead to emotional problems as a result of falling behind in school or receiving constant reprimands from adults or ridicule from other children.

No single cause for ADHD is known. Scientists suspect that a combination of heredity, environment and biological problems contribute to development of the disorder. For example, studies show that parents of some children suffering from ADHD were also diagnosed as having the disorder. Investigators have suggested many other theories but their validity has not been established.

A child should undergo a complete medical evaluation to ensure an accurate diagnosis and proper treatment. Youngsters may develop inappropriate behaviors because they can't hear or see well enough to know what is going on around them. Or another physical or emotional illness may be contributing to the behavioral problem.

Treatment can include the use of medications, special education programs that help the child keep up academically and psychotherapy.

ATTENTION-DEFICIT / HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) continued

Between 70 and 80 % of children with ADHD respond to medications when they are properly used. Medication allows the child a chance to improve his or her attention span, perform tasks better and control impulsive behavior. As a result, children get along better with their teachers, classmates and parents, which improves their self-esteem. Also, the effects of the medication help them gain the benefits of educational programs geared toward their needs.

Like virtually all medications, those used for ADHD have side effects. These include insomnia, loss of appetite and in some cases irritability, stomachaches or headaches. Adjusting the dosage or timing of the medication can control such side effects. Psychotherapy is commonly used in combination with medications, as are school and family meetings. By working with the therapist, a child can learn to cope with his or her disorder and the reaction of others to it, and develop techniques to better control his or her behavior.

Resources for ADHD

- St. Elizabeth Behavioral Health Center - call 578-5900 for information
- The Attention Deficit Disorders Council of Greater Cincinnati 241 -4089
Monthly adult support group meets 4th Thursday at 7:30 pm
Groups are free and open to the public, meet at Springer School

Organizations to Contact for Information

- Adult ADD Association
1225 East Sunset Drive, Suite 640
Bellingham, WA 98226-3529
(206) 647-6681
- Adult Attention Deficit Foundation
132 North Woodward Avenue
Birmingham, MI 48003
(313)540-6335
- Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)
P.O. Box 488
West Newbury, MA 01985
- CHADD (Children & Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder)
499 Northwest 70th Ave, Suite 308
Plantation, FL 33317
(305) 587-3700