

Understanding ADHD

Attention –Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the name given to a set of characteristics, which cause children to have problems paying attention, controlling impulses, and regulating behavior. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th Edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association, provides the most generally accepted definition of the disorder based on current research and clinical practice. It divides this condition into three sub-types:

- Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder Primarily Inattentive Type
 - Requires six or more of nine symptoms to be present
- Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder Primarily Hyperactive-Impulsive Type
 - Requires five of nine symptoms to be present
 - Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder Combined Type
 - Symptoms from both sub-types are present
- The symptoms must have been present for at least 6 months to a degree that is inconsistent with a person’s developmental level
- Some symptoms must be present before age 7
- Some symptoms must be present in two or more settings (e.g. school, work, home)
- There must be evidence of significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning

In general if you see a child who is experiencing many of the following characteristics on a consistent basis, you may want to contact a medical professional for an evaluation.

- ✓ Often does not seem to listen when spoken to
- ✓ Often has difficulty organizing tasks or activities
- ✓ Is often distracted by extraneous stimuli
- ✓ Often fidgets or squirms in seat
- ✓ Often runs, climbs, or talks excessively
- ✓ Often has difficulty waiting for their turn
- ✓ Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- ✓ Often blurts out answers before a question has been completed

How is a child diagnosed with ADHD?

Only a medical doctor or certified mental health specialist can accurately make the diagnosis of ADHD. Diagnosing a child means that someone will not only examine a child’s behavior, but will also complete an extensive interview and family history with the child’s parents. Because there are other factors that lead to behaviors that “look like” ADHD, it is important to consider how and when problem behaviors began to develop.

Is a child with ADHD eligible for special help at school?

Children with ADHD may be able to receive help under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). For more information on these laws visit MPACT’s website at www.ptimpact.com.

For more information visit: www.chadd.org