

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder



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People with ADHD may have a hard time paying attention, sitting still for a long time, or making impulse decisions. ADHD is common and is often diagnosed in childhood (about 9% of children between 3-17), although many people with ADHD may not be diagnosed until they are adults.

Types of ADHD

There are three types of ADHD. A diagnosis of ADHD happens when at least six of the following signs occur, with some having started before a person is seven. Serious difficulties in at least two settings, such as home, school or work, must also happen. Each type has its own signs and are explained below:

1. **Inattentive** type often:
 - Have a hard time paying attention to details
 - Make mistakes in homework or have a hard time finishing homework at all
 - Have a hard time organizing things, may lose things easily
 - Are forgetful or easily distracted, may not seem to listen when spoken to
2. **Hyperactive/impulsive** type often:
 - Fidget with their hands or feet or squirm in their seat, move too much when not appropriate
 - Have a hard time doing things quietly
 - Talk too much, blurt out answers, have difficulty waiting their turn
 - Are 'on the go' or act as if they are 'driven by a motor'
 - Have difficulty awaiting their turn
 - Blurt out answer before a question has been completed
3. **Combined** type: This is the most common type of ADHD. It is a mix of the first and second type.

What are the causes?

Like many other illnesses, many things can cause ADHD, such as:

- Genes
- Cigarette, alcohol, or drug use during pregnancy
- Experience with environmental toxins during pregnancy, or at a young age
- Low birth weight
- Brain injuries

Treatment

The most proven treatments are medication and behavioral therapy. Self-management, education programs and assistance through schools or work are also treatment approaches.

- **Medication:** Sometime antidepressants may be used, most commonly stimulants are prescribed.
- **Behavioral Therapy,** such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which teaches a person to monitor their own behavior.
- **Family Therapy**

Other Approaches

Many families and individuals prefer not to use medications, or they find that medication/therapy can be supported with the following approaches:

- Providing step by step instructions
- Breaking long assignments into smaller chunks
- Focusing on and rewarding good behavior
- Finding time for breaks for exercise or play
- Find helpful work adjustments (standing desks, resistance bands, walks, etc.)
- Request a 504 or IEP plan in school
- Use of fidget toys or chewing gum to help with focus
- Work with professionals to learn calming techniques and breathing exercises
- Being patient and understanding