

What Is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

ADHD is a condition where a person's brain works a bit differently. Even though it's called "attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder," people with ADHD don't lack attention—they just have trouble controlling it. They might feel restless, have difficulty focusing, or act before thinking.

ADHD looks different in everyone. Some children may seem calm but feel busy or noisy inside, while others have their energy on full display. Signs of ADHD usually appear before age 12 and can affect how a person does at school, home, and with friends.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How common is ADHD?

Millions of children in the U.S. have ADHD. Boys are diagnosed at a higher rate than girls.

For Parents and Caregivers: What should I do if I suspect my child may have ADHD?

Talk to a medical provider and your child's school. They may ask questions to understand what is happening, or refer you to a specialist. You can also go straight to a mental health specialist, which can help if your child's symptoms are harder to see or you know what treatment is needed.

For Youth: What should I do if I think I may have ADHD?

Everyone struggles to focus or control their behavior sometimes. But if it happens a lot, affecting school or friendships, it might be time to get help. Talk to an adult you trust, and ask for support.

What kind of help is there for ADHD?

Common ways to treat children and youth with ADHD include:

- **Behavior therapy:** Teaches skills to manage emotions, improve focus, and build good habits. Parents can learn strategies to support their child.
- **Medication:** Some people take medication to help with focus and reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity.

What other conditions are common in people with ADHD?

Sometimes, people with ADHD have other conditions like learning difficulties, anxiety, depression, or sleep disorders. Be open with the medical provider about all symptoms.

Talking with a Medical Provider

When talking with medical providers or specialists, you might want to:

- Bring notes! Ahead of the appointment, take notes on anything that worries you.
- Share feedback from teachers about behavior and learning at school.
- Ask questions like:
 - “Is this behavior typical for my child’s age?”
 - “Could anything else be causing this?”
 - “What kind of treatments might help?”

What You Can Do at Home

Getting help can take time. While waiting you can:

- **Create routines:** Keep daily schedules. Use checklists or charts. Give warnings before changing activities.
- **Give clear instructions:** Speak in simple, short sentences. Ask your child to repeat what you said to confirm they understand.
- **Encourage movement:** Regular exercise can improve focus and lower hyperactivity.
- **Create calm:** Quiet, distraction-free zones help. Break homework down into small steps with breaks in between.

Learning about ADHD and getting help is a journey. You’re not alone.

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NYS Department of Health County Programs – CYSHCN



<https://on.ny.gov/43ho1ZK>

ACT for Youth: ADHD



<https://bit.ly/act-adhd>

About This Series

This series of handouts on health conditions was written by clinicians in Weill Cornell Medicine’s Pediatric Mental Health Integration Program, partners in the ACT for Youth CYSHCN Program Center of Excellence at Cornell University.

