

Attention Disorders

BIRTH DEFECT RESEARCH FOR CHILDREN



What are Attention Disorders?

There are two different types of ADDs:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).



Attention Disorders



How do you know if a child has an ADD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

The signs of ADHD are usually present before a child is seven years old. If a child has had eight or more of the following symptoms for six months or more, he/she may have ADHD.

1. Fidgets, squirms, always restless
2. Doesn't want to stay in his/her seat
3. Easily distracted, can't concentrate very long
4. Can't learn to take turns
5. Blurts out answers
6. Has problems following instructions
7. Has difficulty paying attention
8. Does not finish what he/she starts
9. Difficulty with playing quietly
10. Talks all the time
11. Interrupts others
12. Doesn't seem to listen although hearing is okay
13. Often loses things (school work, books, etc.)
14. Acts before thinking leading to risk taking activities

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

The child with ADD is not hyperactive, but may have many of the following difficulties:

1. Problems with concentration
2. Cannot follow directions
3. Does not finish what he/she starts
4. Loses things (school work, books, etc.)
5. May be very messy or overly neat
6. Often quiet and shy
7. Easily distracted by sights, sounds, movements
8. May seem depressed

There is probably no single cause for ADDs, but some of the causes being investigated include:

Genetic Pre-disposition: The family of a child with ADD will often report that other family members have had similar problems.

Allergy: Children with ADDs may also have allergies. If you had to change formulas frequently when he/she was a baby, your child may be showing early signs of food allergies. Recent reports have indicated that food allergy diets may improve some symptoms of ADDs in food allergic children.

Toxic Substances: Exposure to high levels of lead may cause symptoms of ADDs. A simple blood test can show whether a child's body contains too much lead. The effects of exposure to toxic substances during pregnancy are also being studied.

How Many Children Have ADDs?

Up to 8% of all children have ADDs and it occurs ten times more often in boys than in girls. 92% of children with ADDs also have learning problems in reading, math, speech and/or language skills.

How Can You Help A Child With ADDs?

Medical Examination: Every child with ADD needs a thorough physical examination to rule out any health problems like high lead levels that may require treatment.

Psychological Assessment: Children with ADDs can become depressed and have behavioral and emotional problems. A psychologist or psychiatrist can often help work out better ways to cope with their problems.

Drug Treatment: Pediatricians and psychiatrists may advise prescribing certain drugs to help control some symptoms of ADDs. Drugs like Ritalin, Cylert or Dexedrine may have a calming effect on children with ADDs and help them concentrate. When you are considering drug treatment, it is important to have your physician explain both the benefits and the risks of the recommended drug.

Educational: Today many educators recognize the problems that these children have with schoolwork. Monitor your

Attention Disorders



child's progress by staying in touch with his/her teacher. You can help your child by organizing his/her schoolwork and setting up a special time for homework. Your child's room or working area should also be kept clear of clutter, bright distracting colors, patterns, objects, and noises.

Family Support: You are your child's most important resource. One good way you can learn to understand and help your child is by joining a support group of parents of children with ADDs. Raising a child with ADDs is not easy. You may experience frustration and even anger. It can help to talk with others who have had similar feelings.

Exercise: Although children with ADDs may have coordination problems that make it difficult to participate in team sports, they can benefit from regular exercise and from developing the pride of mastering a physical skill. They should be encouraged to try sports which depend on individual effort like dance, martial arts, bowling, ice skating, tennis, swimming and golf.

What Is Special About A Child with ADDs?

Most children with ADDs are bright with average or above average intelligence. Many are very creative. Others have excellent mechanical skills. Some love to be the life of the party. Help your child develop their special gifts. Some very famous people were once children with ADDs and learning problems, yet they went on to achieve great things.

Will A Child Outgrow ADDs?

Some of the symptoms of ADD/ADHD may change as a child moves toward the teenage years. Hyperactivity may decrease, but risk-taking behavior may become more of a concern as children with ADDs are exposed to the three D's: driving, dating, and drugs (including alcohol). The teenage years may be difficult for any child, but doubly so for the child with ADDs.

Fact Sheet by:

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