

ADD & ADHD What is it and How to Cope

What are the signs of ADD/ADHD?

Attention Deficit Disorder & Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity disorder is a behavior pattern that involves hyperactivity, inadequate attention span and difficulty concentrating. This disorder affects one in 20 children, being more common in boys than in girls. The pure ADD form doesn't have as much hyperactivity as it has "zoning out", loss of concentration and focus. Impulsivity can be a sign with both disorders. In children, it can be helpful to talk to teachers and others who spend time with the child to see if the behavior fits. It's hard to diagnose before 6-7 years of age, as this type of behavior is normal in those age ranges, but kids with these disorders were typically worse than their peers when they were younger. Some mothers even report that these children were more active in the womb before birth.

Signs of a lack of attention

- Difficulty following instructions
- Not seeming to listen to parents or teachers
- Not being able to focus on activities
- Frequently losing things needed for school or at home
- Not being able to pay attention to details
- Appearing disorganized
- Being unable to plan ahead effectively
- Being forgetful
- Appearing very distractible

Typically ADD/ADHD are patterns of behavior noted at home and school, if the problem is only noted in one setting then there's a good chance that it's more of an issue with caretaking or other factors. Keep in mind too, that with these disorders, activities with fast pace and frequent changes, as in TV & Video games will keep them entertained a lot longer than a lecture or reading a book quietly. They thrive on commotion and activity/frequent change etc. If your child is "off in another world" a lot, this may be an indicator of the ADD subtype. Inability to finish projects and tasks is another common hallmark for both children and adults with this disorder. Many things get started, few get finished. With children, disciplinary actions don't usually have much affect. A visit to a doctor is in order if these seem to be issues affecting you or your child(ren). Vision and hearing testing is a good place to start with kids, as they get bored when they can't keep up due to problems in these areas. It may be a good idea to have formal testing done with a child psychologist such as the Test of Variable Attentiveness (TOVA) and other instruments that are available to determine if the problem exists. Sometimes a "therapeutic trial" of medication will be used as an initial evaluation. Once a child is in the school system, they can be evaluated by the school system, this is required of schools. A team effort with teachers, parents, doctor, psychologist, caretakers, coaches all working together will provide the best results for children with this disorder.

Children do tend to outgrow the hyperactivity in later years as they grow older. These children can be very bright and productive in their adulthood.

Many people worry about drug abuse with children with ADD/ADHD. Studies have shown that when these children are appropriately treated with medications they're actually less likely to become drug addicts, even though the medications are potentially addictive. It turns out that frequently when these kids do abuse drugs they tend to abuse

stimulants—which are the therapeutic drugs. They seem to be trying to treat themselves to normal behavior and functioning.

What can make life easier with ADD/ADHD?

A routine schedule is essential, set times to wake up, eat, work, play, study, relax each day helps.

Simple house rules with clear consequences for violation.

Ensure that directions are understood.

Reward good behavior.

Ensure the child(ren) are supervised at all times.

Set up a homework routine.

Focus on effort more than grades.

Talk with the teachers.

ADD/ADHD in Adults

Difficulty organizing, listening to instructions, remembering details and controlling behavior are common in adults with ADD/ADHD. Typically adults with this disorder will recall that they had these problems in childhood as well as the symptoms listed above.

Loss of temper can be another symptom, as can trying to stay calm and in a good mood.

Check with coworkers, friends & family members if you're not sure if you "qualify".

Other mimics of adult ADD/ADHD are important to eliminate as the cause first, these can include;

Depression

Anxiety

Bipolar disorder

Thyroid problems

Alcohol, Drug & Medication effects

Lead & other heavy metal exposures or past exposure

Learning disabilities

Food sensitivities & allergies

There is a symptom checklist that can be helpful in diagnosing the disorder and in tracking response to therapy:

ADHD SRS	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1. How often do you have trouble wrapping up the final details of a project, once the challenging parts are over?					
2. How often do you have difficulty getting things in order when you have to do a task that requires organization?					
3. How often do you have problems remembering appointments or obligations?					
4. When you have a task that requires a lot of thought, how often do you avoid or delay getting started?					
5. How often do you fidget or squirm with your hands or feet when you have to sit down for a long time?					

6. How often do you feel overly active and compelled to do things like you were driven by a motor?					
Add the number of checkmarks in the darkly shaded area./					
Four or more checkmarks indicate that our symptoms may be consistent with ADHD.					
It may be beneficial for you to talk to your doctor about an evaluation.					

TREATMENT:

What can be done to treat these disorders?

Complementary & Alternative Approaches:

Many people realize that amphetamines are used to treat attention deficit disorder. Not everybody realizes that there are other options available.

One treatment that has it's own diagnosis consists of a urine test to look at the neurotransmitter precursors. Neurotransmitters are the chemical messengers that move from one brain cell to another. They're each formed from specific amino acids. Urine testing of the amino acid profiles can give clues to how the disorder can be corrected and treated with supplements aimed at correcting the amino acid imbalance.

www.neurorelief.com has information on the testing and treatment of ADD/ADHD and other disorders with supplements. Other supplements include;

Vitamin C 4-8,000 mg daily

Vitamin B Complex

Multivitamin with minerals

Niacnamide (Vitamn B3) 500 mg three or more times daily

Testing for and eliminating heavy metal poisoning, nutrient deficiencies and food sensitivities and allergies can also be helpful.

Reduction of yeast/candida and their products such as bread & baked goods as well as simple sugars and food dyes can help. Sometimes reduction of dairy and egg products will also be helpful.

EEG Neural Feedback

This is a form of brain training. Although considered experimental by insurance companies (thus they don't need to cover this service—which can be quite effective), it's available locally www.centerforbrain.com

The basic theory of this is that the brain is not properly balanced and tuned up in those with ADD/ADHD. This form of training can strengthen "weak" areas of the brain and help the brain to control "overactive" areas with practice. It's done with continuous brain-wave monitoring using an EEG machine such as would be found in a medical facility. The difference though, is that there's a connection to a computer that gives the patient instant feedback on what's going on in the brain so that the appropriate behavior can be rewarded. In this way it's possible to learn to slow activity in the brain that regulates focus and attention allowing it to get stronger and gain more control. What does it look like? Imagine playing PacMan without using your hands. That's what it looks like! When the brain pattern is working in the desired manner, the pacman goes along the maze and makes noise. If the patient is distracted or stops the "correct"

activity, the pacman stops until it's resumed again and pacman continues on. This form of therapy is more time consuming but seems to produce a more permanent result in those who've taken the time and energy to practice it. We don't know what the long-term results of stimulant use on the brain will cause. Increased fast activity in the brain can cause difficulties with impulsivity, aggression & anxiety. The same type of training can be done to slow those areas of the brain as well.

With Neural Feedback it's possible to give the brain a "tuneup" to speed slow areas, slow fast areas, improve concentration and most types of mental performance. Having personal experience with it, as a physician I can vouch for the fact that it's helpful.

While it's more expensive initially, keep in mind the long-term costs of a lifetime of potentially dangerous medications that we don't fully understand in terms of long-term consequences.

Prescription Medications:

Atomoxetine is the newest of the ADD/ADHD medications, it's thought to work by selective inhibition of the presynaptic norepinephrine transporter—essentially it works on the neurotransmitter norepinephrine. Other medications such as Methylphenidate, Amphetamine, DextroAmphetamine and the other stimulants work as mimics of the norepinephrine neurotransmitter. On the street drugs of this class are known as "Speed". Widely used to keep people awake, get high, suppress appetite and help with weight loss etc.

Other classes of drugs such as Clonidine, a blood pressure drug that works in the brain and antidepressants of the tricyclic and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor class can also be used in various combinations.

The first drug mentioned above has a formal warning of suicide risk, the stimulants are widely known to cause problems and have abuse potential, the antidepressants also have their own issues that need to be monitored. It's interesting that folks with significant ADD/ADHD can take a strong dose of these medications and go to sleep. This is definitely a brain problem, not a behavioral choice by the person with the disorder!

It's strongly urged to seek competent medical help if you or someone you love may have this disorder. Treatments can be very effective and give a normal life and future to those with it.

For more information, check out the Links section of www.tequestafamilypractice.com
To Your Health!

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