



*Make Prevention a CHOICE*

## **Tips For Parents Of Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder Children**

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, affects at least 3-5% of the school age population. You can learn how to effectively manage the disorder within the family unit, and assist the child within the school system. This Tipsheet has been designed to assist families in recognizing the symptoms of ADHD, should they appear, and to better understand your child's behavior once he or she has been diagnosed as ADHD.

### **THE SYMPTOMS**

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|--|---|---|
| *Fidgets with hands or feet                  | *Squirms in seat  | *Difficulty remaining seated                            |
| *Easily distracted                           | *Difficulty awaiting turns in games or group situations | *Gives answers to questions before they are completed   |
| *Talks excessively                           | *Loses things   | *Difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or activities |
| *Interrupts others                           |   |   |
| *Shifts from one uncompleted task to another |   |   |

Not every child with ADHD has all of the above symptoms. A diagnosis of ADHD is made when a child has a number of these symptoms and the symptoms began before the age of 7 and lasted for at least 6 months. Generally symptoms have to be seen in at least two different settings (for example, at home and at school) before a diagnosis is made.

### **DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT**

- ADHD is determined by examining the symptoms, and eliminating other possible causes, such as stress or some behavior associated with your child's stage of development.
- Parents, teachers, and professionals may find evidence suggesting ADHD. However, a physician or mental health professional usually confirms the diagnosis.
- The evaluating professional will spend considerable time reviewing the child's genetic background, early birth history, and developmental and social history. Parents and teachers may also be asked to complete rating scales to assist in evaluating the child's behavior in different settings. The professional will also likely perform a routine physical examination. Although the diagnosis rests primarily upon the individual's behavioral history, psychological tests also provide additional evidence. Attention and impulsivity tests compare the child's behavior to others in the same age group.
- Treatment may include medication and/or psychotherapy. Research has shown that a combination of the two to be the most effective method. Psychotherapy usually involves both the child and their family, so that both can be educated about ADHD.
- The child's anxiety over their condition can be lessened when they learn that there is a reason for their uncontrollable behavior, and that their parents are working with them to make things better.

### **WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO:**

- Allow ADHD children who have trouble doing written assignments to tape record the assignments.
- Assign a buddy to the ADHD child to assist with homework.
- Schedule tests and major assignments at times when the child's medication is at its peak.
- Teachers must try to prevent a discrimination against ADHD children.
- The teacher can set up a behavior management system that will help motivate the child to get their work done.
- Children with ADHD can be classified in need of special education if the ADHD interferes significantly with their learning.
- Children who do not qualify for special education should have accommodations made in the regular classroom.

It is important to remember that the idea is not to make it easier for the ADHD child. The ADHD child has special needs and these accommodations allow the child to reach their full potential.

### **YOUR ROLE AS THE PARENT OF A CHILD WITH ADHD:**

- Gain the necessary knowledge to help you understand and deal with your ADHD child.
- Think of chores or activities that build on your child's strengths and can be done successfully, rather than selecting ones that might be failures, or excusing the child from the activity.
- Focus on your child's strengths, not weaknesses. Understand your child's weaknesses and how they impact his or her performance, behavior and feelings. Find ways to help the child deal with those weaknesses.
- Engage the ADHD child in sports that require minimal eye-hand coordination, such as swimming, soccer, horseback riding, etc. Success in these areas can improve self-image, confidence, the ability to make new friends and the courage to try new activities.
- Inform group leaders about your ADHD child's needs. Give them the suggestions listed above.
- Be aware of the effects of the medications prescribed to treat ADHD. Inform the child's teachers about the importance of taking the drug as prescribed and possible side effects.
- Be assertive. Ask questions. Insist on answers. Work with your school to get help, and get involved with neighborhood or other activities.
- Seek out support groups that may assist you and the family in dealing with the emotional, social and family problems.

For information about ADHD resources available to you in your community, call the Flight and Family Support Center.

## **How to Contact Us**

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