



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is characterized by a pattern of behavior, present in multiple settings (school, home, work), that can result in performance issues in social, educational, or work settings. According to the DSM-V, symptoms are divided into two categories of inattention and hyperactivity

Criteria

- Children must have at least six symptoms from either (or both) the inattention group of criteria and the hyperactivity and impulsivity criteria
- Older adolescents and adults (over age 17 years) must present with five symptoms from either or both categories.
- Several of the individual's ADHD symptoms must be present prior to age 12 years
- Loses things
- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities

Criteria for the three primary presentations are:

Predominantly Inattentive Presentation

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through on instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort

Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Presentation

- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults. Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as if driven by a motor; adults will often feel internally as if they were driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

Combined presentation

- Individual meets both sets of inattention and hyperactive/impulsive criteria

How is a child diagnosed with ADHD?

Only a medical doctor or certified mental health specialist can accurately make the diagnosis of ADHD. Diagnosing a child means that someone will not only examine a child's behavior, but will also complete an extensive interview and family history with the child's parents. Because there are other factors that lead to behaviors that "look like" ADHD, it is important to consider how and when problem behaviors began to develop.

Is a child with ADHD eligible for special help at school?

Children with ADHD may be able to receive help under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). For more information on these laws visit MPACT's website at www.ptimpact.org

Information adapted from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/diagnosis.html>