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## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

About five to ten percent of children in the United States have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is an illness that affects the area of the brain that allows problem solving, planning, sustaining attention, and controlling impulses. ADHD shows up in early childhood and often causes problems for the child in the classroom, on the playground, at home, in the community, and in social settings.

### Symptoms of ADHD

Children with ADHD could have two kinds of problems. Some children have problems paying attention, some are hyperactive and impulsive, and many are both.

Inattention:

- doesn't pay close attention
- makes careless mistakes on schoolwork
- has trouble finishing a task
- has trouble following multi-stepped directions
- loses things such as books, pencils, and toys
- easily distracted by someone or something else
- forgetful

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity:

- squirms in chair and often leaves his or her seat
- runs or climbs when he or she shouldn't
- has trouble playing quietly
- always on the go
- talks too much
- has trouble waiting his or her turn

### Causes of ADHD

Scientists do not know the cause of ADHD. Several factors may play a part in the illness:

- Scientists have found that the brains of ADHD children are different in the way they work, their chemical levels, and their size.
- ADHD tends to run in families.
- Mothers who smoke cigarettes, use drugs, or are exposed to toxins are more likely to have children with ADHD.
- Children exposed to toxins such as lead are more likely to have ADHD.

### Treatment of ADHD

There is no cure for ADHD, but medicine, therapy, education, and support can help a child with the illness to pay attention and control behavior.

**Medicine:** Medicines, known as psychostimulants, are most often used in treating ADHD in children. The medicine works well on the day the pills are taken. The doctor will check the child often to make sure the dose is right to help the child function better.

**Therapy, Education, and Support:** In therapy, the child with ADHD can learn to cope with ADHD symptoms and talk about things that bother him or her. Family therapy is good for helping brothers and sisters learn how to live with someone with ADHD and for helping parents cope with the special challenges of raising a child with ADHD. During group therapy, a child with ADHD can meet others with the same problem, learn more about ADHD, and learn skills for dealing with the problem and getting along with others. Simple changes in the classroom environment can help the child with ADHD learn more. For more education and support, patients and families can contact the resources below:

### Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) ~ (812) 423-4333

Mental Health America  
[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org) ~ (812) 426-2640

National Institute of Mental Health  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)