

What is Attention Deficit Disorder?

ADHD is a chronic problem that makes it hard to pay attention, sit still, focus on specific tasks, or make good choices. It usually starts in childhood. Some people can keep having symptoms as adults as well. Sometimes a child who is high energy or who gets distracted easily can be diagnosed with ADD a bit too quickly. It is important not to label your child if the ADD diagnosis is not really for sure. Some kids with these symptoms will grow out of them. Others really do have ADD and will need treatment.



WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

ADHD starts in childhood, and sometimes can last a lifetime. It can lead to problems in school because of trouble focusing. For adults, it can also cause problems at work. Often people can't concentrate, and will interrupt others. ADD can be very frustrating both for the person who has it and for their teachers and family. Some children with ADD are overly active—they may be diagnosed with ADHD, which is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Others are more quiet and daydreamy, which is called "inattentive ADD."

WHAT CAUSES ADHD?

We do not know what causes ADD. It may be a problem with the nerve connections in the brain. ADHD often runs in families. Sometimes people with ADD have trouble sleeping as well, which can make ADHD worse.

WHAT CAN I DO?

SEE A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL WITH ADD EXPERIENCE:

Work with your health professional to get the right care for your child. Many children have other medical problems at the same time, like issues with sleep, learning, or anxiety. Sometimes special counseling or medications are needed.

CREATE STRUCTURE IN THE DAY:

- Set reachable goals
- Keep a checklist to stay "on task"
- Reward good behavior
- Use calm discipline for bad behavior, like time out or leaving a situation

DIET:

Try an elimination diet. A small number of people have better control after not eating certain foods. To try this diet, take certain foods out of your child's diet for two weeks, and then slowly add one food back to see if it is a "trigger" food. You can take a look at our elimination diet

handout for more information. Below are examples of what to remove:

- Food additives like artificial colors, dyes, flavors, and preservatives.
- Common food sensitivities: remove dairy and wheat (gluten). Others are peanuts, nuts, eggs, soy and seafood.
- If no change is seen in behavior or focus, then return to a regular healthy diet.

EXERCISE REGULARLY:

Aerobic exercise: Can help with focus, over activity, anxiousness and impulsiveness.



LOWER STRESS:

- Try massage. Massage has been shown to help with behavior and mood.
- Try yoga. Yoga may help with symptoms.
- Reduce screen time: too much time on computers, smartphones, or watching TV can make ADD worse. You should limit screen time to zero if possible, or at least to not more than two hours a day.

SUPPLEMENTS:

- Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Found in fish oil, taking this may help with behavior and control. Look for fish oil with high EPA.
- Melatonin: Many people with ADD also have trouble sleeping, and melatonin may help.
- Zinc: May help some people with over activity, impulsiveness and may lower the dose of medicines needed. This benefit may only be

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit nciph.org/adhd



