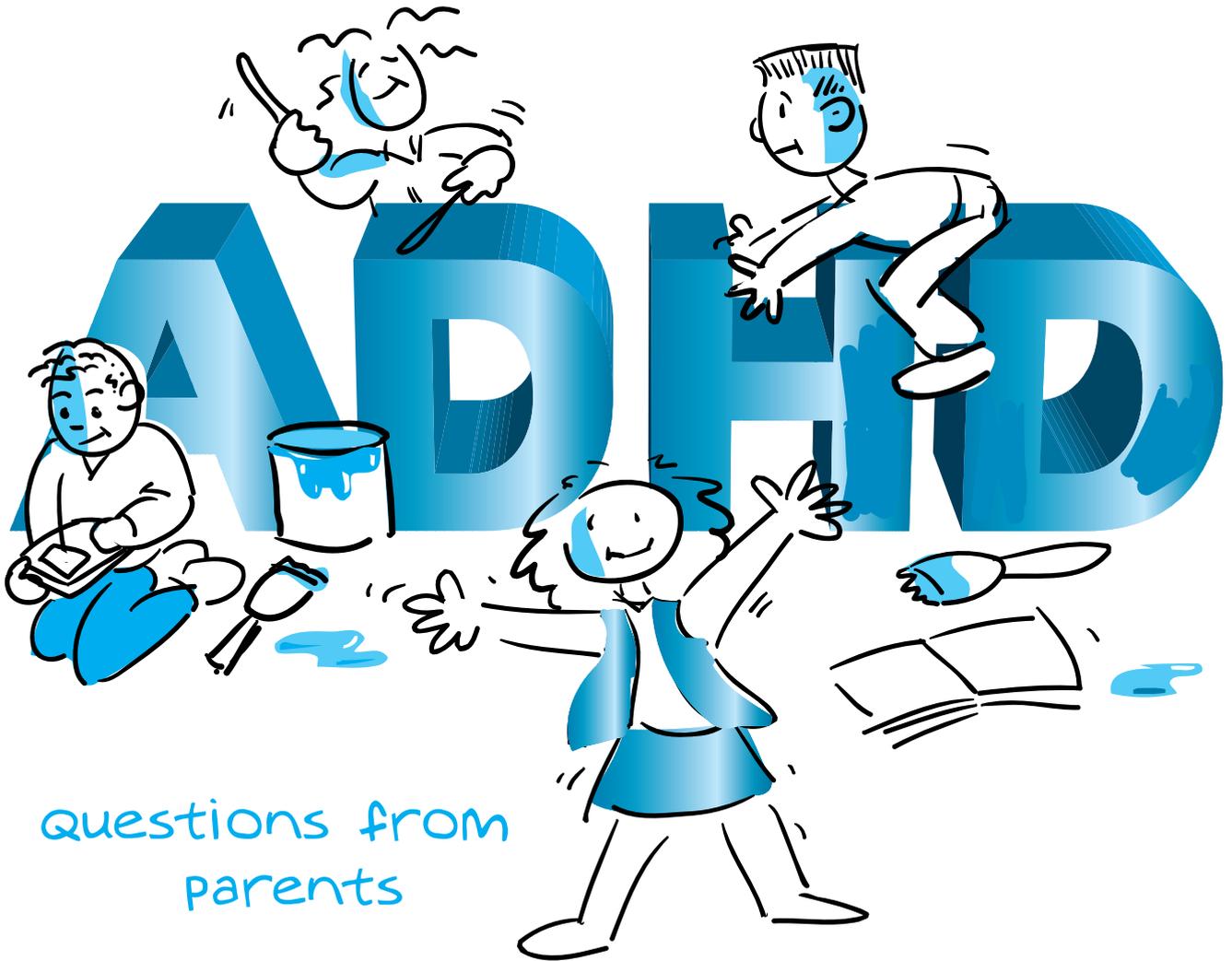


# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



Questions from  
parents

# Important signs of ADHD behavior

## ***Behavioral signs of inattentiveness:***

- makes careless errors; fails to attend to details
- has difficulty maintaining focus to a task
- requires repetition of directions
- fails to complete tasks (written work; homework; chores)
- is unorganized; notebooks and backpacks are a mess
- loses necessary materials, pencils, books, papers
- is easily distracted by noises, peers, own thoughts
- forgets often; leaves homework at home or school; forgets what he/she is supposed to do

## ***Behavioral signs of impulsivity:***

- calls out answers before questions are completed or begins tasks before directions are finished
- has difficulty taking turns or waiting in line
- often interrupts

## ***Behavioral signs of hyperactivity:***

- has difficulty sitting still; has difficulty remaining seated; legs bouncing all the time
- has excessive energy; “always on the go”; “has two speeds - fast and stop”
- talks all the time; has significant difficulty remaining quiet
- sleeps restlessly; has difficulty falling asleep; requires significantly less sleep than peers; “roams all over the bed” while sleeping

# Questions from parents

*My child's teacher says that he is **easily distracted, impulsive, and hyperactive**. Does he have an attention problem and how would I know?*

Let's start with "What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?" ADHD is a neuro-developmental disorder that affects the manner and speed with which the brain processes information. Compared to other children of the same age, a child with ADHD has difficulty screening out incoming information and suppressing the impulses to respond. Additional processing time may be required to make sense of the "meaningful" information.

*My daughter has **difficulty completing her work** but she's not hyperactive. She's a social butterfly who likes to talk and that's why she doesn't finish her work. Could the two be related?*

Hyperactivity does not have to be a primary characteristic in order for the ADHD diagnosis to be accurate. In fact, children without the hyperactive component are often **misdiagnosed**. In the typical class, these children are well-behaved, quiet, and lost. Inattentiveness and impulsivity are the two most primary characteristics; therefore, these children fail to complete assignments, complete them incorrectly, appear to be daydreaming, and/or seem to be unmotivated. Your daughter's "social talking" could be her way of compensating by attempting to find out what she should be doing. Constant, non-stop chatter, on the other hand, could be a display of the excessive energy.



Forgetfulness is often a symptom of distractibility

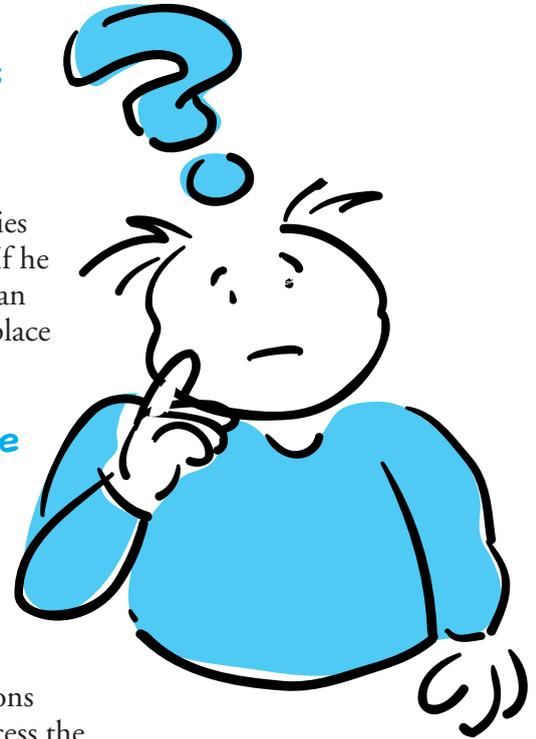
Why is my son so **unorganized and forgetful**?

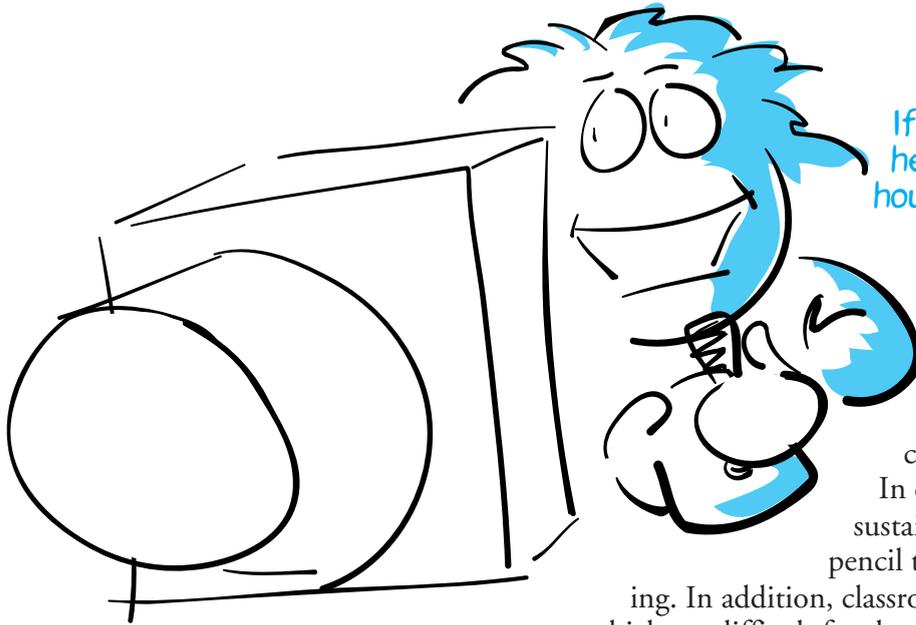
He seldom follows directions, can't remember what his homework is supposed to be, and then leaves it at school/home.

It is not uncommon for children with attention difficulties to lose materials or carelessly handle their possessions. If he becomes easily distracted by noises or events, then he can “forget” what he was supposed to be doing or lose his place while working.

He frequently says that he **didn't hear me or that he just forgot**. How do I know if his problems are hearing or memory related rather than an attention problem?

Can your son “hear” soft voices or whispers? Does he turn to environmental noises such as car horns, the phone, or a dog barking? If the answers to these questions are yes, then maybe your son heard but just didn't process the information in the first place, rather than having forgotten. However, you may want to seek a professional evaluation to rule out a hearing problem.





*If it were an attention problem, he couldn't play video games for hours - right?*

Video games are fast-paced and ever-changing. The child who is distracted by everything can do quite well because he takes in all of the various lights, bells, and creatures of these fast-paced games. In contrast, school work requires sustained attention to many paper and pencil tasks, which are much less interesting. In addition, classrooms are full of many distractions which are difficult for the ADHD child to screen out.

*Okay, if my child has an attention problem, wouldn't I see it in settings other than school?*

Absolutely! Take a few minutes and think about your child's interactions with friends, his performance in sports, and his behavior in day care, church, club events, etc. On the ball field, is your child watching the butterflies, picking dandelions, or drawing in the chalk lines? Does he have trouble taking turns or waiting in line? Does eagerness to respond or participate lead to an incorrect performance? Do you hear others telling your child to "pay attention," "chill out for a minute, so you'll know what to do," or "sit still?"

*In contrast, school work requires sustained attention to many paper and pencil tasks, which are much less interesting.*

*My daughter really doesn't like school. She is probably **just bored or unmotivated** to do school work. If it is a subject that she really likes (i.e., Barbie dolls) or if I take something valuable away or promise to buy something really special, then she can do the work in no time. Explain!*

What we find is that children with ADHD put forth an extreme amount of effort in order to avoid punishment, collect the reward, and to enjoy the areas of special interest. This degree of effort is quite tiring and cannot be maintained all day, every day. Their daily grades may have a roller coaster appearance, (an "A" today and a "D" tomorrow) as a result. Children with ADHD may tire quickly of a given reward, so a "reinforcement menu" which varies the reward may be helpful.

*Homework is a nightmare! We work for hours on an assignment that should have only taken a few minutes. Unless I sit right there with him, he gets no where. Why is it such a struggle?*

Homework is indeed one of the most difficult and frustrating experiences for the inattentive child, as well as for parents. Homework is completed at a time when both the child and the parents are most tired. Even in the best of circumstances, sheer fatigue can make homework frustrating.



**Children with ADHD may tire of a given reward, so a "reinforcement menu" which varies the reward may be helpful.**



*My kid is a good kid who does things without thinking. She doesn't mean to hurt anyone or break the rules; she always feels so bad afterwards. She just doesn't think! How could this be part of an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder?*

Inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity often interfere with the way a child relates to others. One child bumps into another in line; the second decks the first without thinking, or even knowing that the first child had really just tripped. It was all an accident, but the second child is in trouble for hitting despite the sincere feelings of regret.

Children with ADHD, especially those who put a lot of effort into attending to their work at school, may have little energy left for homework. **Frequent parent assistance** is an essential component for the completion of homework. The key to success however, is to reduce the amount of tension and stress by **focusing on the completion** of the assignment, breaking assignments into **smaller parts**, taking **frequent breaks** with long assignments, and **rewarding the child** for his efforts. It is a good idea to have a **consistent routine** (time and place) for homework, as well.

I was just like that when I was a kid and I turned out okay. **If I had an attention problem, I wouldn't be able to do my job - right?**

ADHD was not well known or defined 20 to 30 years ago. You could have exhibited the same behaviors and had just as much difficulty learning as your child does now. ADHD does run in families. Many people learn to compensate, therefore the ADHD features are not so noticeable in adults. For example, we write important information down on paper in order to better focus our attention and provide ourselves with a record. It is important to note that ADHD doesn't "go away" as we grow older. Compensation skills just make it less obvious.

**Where do I go from here? If this is a school problem, why should I consult my pediatrician?**

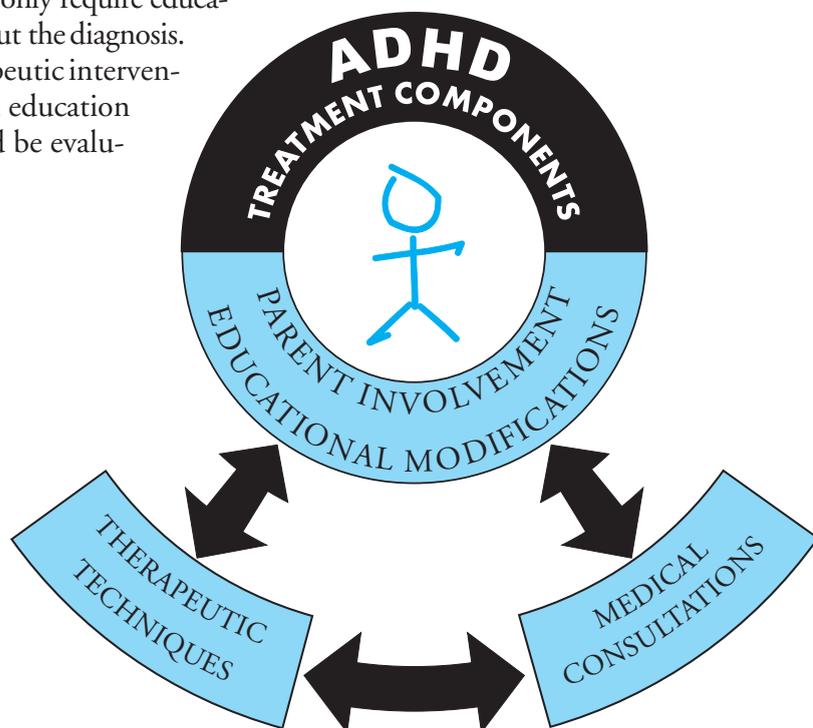
While ADHD can be diagnosed by psychologists or physicians, medical input is considered to be quite important. Many medical conditions, such as seizure disorders and diabetes, can display themselves with similar behaviors. A visit with your physician is often recommended.

**It is important to note that ADHD doesn't "go away" as we grow older. Compensation skills just make it less obvious.**



## Is medication the *only* answer?

Treatment involves a variety of interventions. When medication is required, it should be coupled with education about the disability and, at times, therapeutic support. Some children may have mild symptoms and only require educational modifications and education about the diagnosis. Others may require medication, therapeutic interventions, educational modifications, and education about the diagnosis. Each case should be evaluated on an individual basis.



## If I think my child has ADHD, what should I do?

Discuss your concerns with your child's teacher and see if he/she shares your observations. The teacher may suggest a consultation with other school staff, such as the school psychologist. In addition, there are many good books for parents and children. A brief list of the many good resources follows.

# RESOURCES

## *Additional information may be obtained by:*

- ◆ calling your physician
- ◆ contacting your school psychologist or guidance counselor
- ◆ visiting your local library
- ◆ calling ADD Warehouse at 1-800-233-9273
- ◆ calling CH.A.D.D. voicemail at (410) 721-2468

## *Books for parents*

### *Hyperactive Children*

by Russell Barkley, New York, Guildford Press, 1981.

### *Your Hyperactive Child*

by Barbara Ingersoll, Doubleday, 1988.

### *The ADD Hyperactivity Workbook For Parents, Teachers, & Kids*

by Harvey C Parker, Florida: Impact Publications, 1988.

### *Attention Deficit Disorders*

by Larry Silver, CIBA Pharmaceuticals. Summit, New Jersey.

### *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders, Assessment and Treatment for Children and Adolescents*

by Keith Conners, Multi-Health Systems, Inc. 1994.

## *Books for children:*

### *Otto Learns About His Medicine.*

by Mathew Galvin, Magination Press, 1988.

### *The Hyperactive Turtle*

by Deborah M. Shelly Moss, Woodbine House, 1989.

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The Office of Psychological Services  
Barbara M. Schwartz, Ph.D., NCSP, Coordinator  
Created by Pauline Prince, Ph.D. with assistance from:  
Virginia Dolan, Ed.D.  
Nancy Davidson, M.A.

in collaboration with the Office of Psychological Services, Anne Arundel County Public Schools  
Design and Illustrations by Joe Thompson, Design Specialist, Design and Print Services

Questions regarding the contents of this brochure should be directed to:  
the Office of Psychological Services (410) 222-5321

For information on ordering copies of this series of brochures, please call (410) 222-5101. Subjects covered include *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism, Emotionally Disturbed, Mental Retardation, and Learning Disabilities.*



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Carol S. Parham, Superintendent