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## What is ADHD?

### What is ADHD?

Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is an inability to use skills of attention effectively. Studies suggest that 5-10% of children, adolescents and adults may have ADHD. Sometimes ADHD is called ADD or Attention Deficit Disorder. ADD is an older name for ADHD.

Many who have this disorder are "hyperactive." This means that they may seem very active and move about a lot. Some do not show this behavior. Some seem to miss ideas, or "not pay attention" in class but they give no indication of overly active behavior. Some can display both patterns. Boys seem to be diagnosed with ADHD more than girls. This may be because girls are less likely to act out in class.

ADHD is a disorder that seems to be caused by a weakness in how the brain uses chemicals, or neurotransmitters. There may be a specific set of brain circuits involved. Medications, such as Ritalin, are used most often to treat ADHD because of the deficiency in brain chemicals.

### What are the symptoms of ADHD?

The American Psychiatric Association has a book that lists symptoms of problems found in children and adults. This is called the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual- Fourth Revision (DSM-IV). This manual lists the symptoms of ADHD.

#### Symptoms of inattention

- Careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities.
- Has a hard time sustaining attention in tasks or play
- Often does not seem to listen to what others are saying
- Often does not follow through on instructions and often fails to finish homework
- Has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Often avoids or dislikes tasks that require sustained mental effort
- Often loses things
- Is often distracted by other things that go on in a room
- Forgetfulness

#### Hyperactive-Impulsive Symptoms

- Fidgets and squirms with hands or feet in seat
- Inability to stay seated
- Climbing on things when inappropriate

- Often acts as if "motor driven"- difficulty with leisure activities
- Often talks excessively
- Difficulty waiting in lines
- Often interrupts others

### Other important points

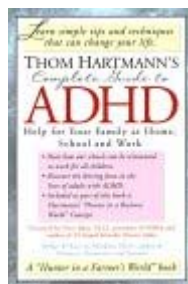
**ADHD inattentive** applies to individuals with at least six (6) of the symptoms of inattention. These symptoms must have persisted for over 6 months. These symptoms must be maladaptive; that is, they will seem immature for a person's age.

**ADHD hyperactive** applies to individuals with at least six of the symptoms from the hyperactive-impulsive list.

**ADHD combined type** applies to individuals who have six symptoms in both of the categories of inattention and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms.

### Other parts of diagnosis

- There must be a history of this disorder. Symptoms begin before 7 years of age.
- Symptoms are present across settings. If a child is inattentive at school but not so at home or playing with his/her friends a diagnosis of ADHD is not expected.
- Symptoms must significantly reduce an individual's ability to work or learn.
- ADHD is not diagnosed when a person is depressed, anxious or when the person has another disorder that can explain the ADHD-like behaviors.
- Symptoms must be present for at least 6 months before a diagnosis can be made.



#### Recommended book:

Thom Hartmann's **Complete Guide to ADHD: Help for Your Family at Home, School and Work (2000)** offers an easy to read explanation of behaviors found in children and adults with ADHD. ISBN 1887424520. **Click to buy**

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