



## ADHD Resource Guide

### Overview<sup>i</sup>

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is a condition that makes it unusually difficult for kids to concentrate on tasks, to pay attention, to sit still, and to control impulsive behavior. While some children exhibit mostly inattentive behaviors and others predominantly hyperactive and impulsive, the majority of those with ADHD have a combination of both, which may make it very difficult for them to function in school, and create a lot of conflict at home.

### Symptoms of hyperactive or impulsive ADHD:<sup>i</sup>

- Fidgeting or squirming, trouble staying in one place or waiting his turn
- Excessive running and climbing
- Trouble playing quietly
- Extreme impatience
- Always seems to be "on the go" or "driven by a motor"
- Excessive talking or interrupting, blurting out answers

### Symptoms of inattentive ADHD:<sup>i</sup>

- Makes careless mistakes
- Is easily distracted
- Has difficulty following instructions
- Doesn't seem to be listening when spoken to directly
- Has trouble organizing
- Avoids or dislikes sustained effort
- Is forgetful, always losing things

### How do I know if my child has ADHD?<sup>ii</sup>

There is no single test that can tell if your child has ADHD. To make a diagnosis, the doctor or specialist will examine your child and use several rating scales to track ADHD symptoms. The specialist will also collect information from you, your family, and your child's teachers. Sometimes it can be hard to diagnose a child with ADHD because symptoms may look like other problems. For example, a child may seem quiet and well-behaved, but in fact he or she is having a hard time paying attention and is often distracted. Or, a child may act badly in school, but teachers don't realize that the child has ADHD.

### How Does ADHD Affect School and Social Life?<sup>iii</sup>

Symptoms of ADHD can make school difficult for a child with the disorder. Although most children with ADHD have normal or above-normal intelligence, 40 to 60 percent have serious learning difficulties. Many others have specific problems with schoolwork or maintaining good grades, and face particular challenges with assignments and tests that require focused attention or lengthy writing, or have time limits. On a social level, children with ADHD often



have trouble developing meaningful relationships with peers and family members. Other children may find it frustrating to play with a child who has ADHD, because classic symptoms include difficulty following rules, waiting one's turn or excessive talking.

### **What Other Disorders Commonly Occur With ADHD?<sup>iii</sup>**

Children and adolescents with ADHD are more likely than children without the disorder to suffer from other mental disorders. About one-half of all young people with ADHD have oppositional defiant disorder; about one-quarter have an anxiety disorder; as many as one-third have depression; and one-fifth have bipolar disorder. Adolescents with untreated ADHD are at risk for substance abuse disorders. Research shows that young people treated for ADHD have lower rates of substance abuse than children who go untreated.

### **What Causes ADHD?<sup>iii</sup>**

ADHD is nobody's fault. Researchers believe that biology and genes play a large role in the development of ADHD. In fact, 30 to 40 percent of children diagnosed with ADHD have relatives with the same disorder. Brain scans reveal that the brains of children with ADHD differ from those of children without the disorder. Children with ADHD are thought to have problems with the part of the brain that controls the organization and direction of thought and behavior.

### **Treatment and Prognosis<sup>i</sup>**

In most cases, the first line of treatment for ADHD is medication which helps children concentrate and limit impulsiveness. Psychostimulants such as methylphenidate (Ritalin) and dextroamphetamine (Adderall) are commonly used to stimulate the production of neurotransmitters that regulate attention and impulse control.

Behavior therapy is sometimes used in combination with medication. Parent-child interaction therapy and other forms of parent training teach parents how to cultivate good behaviors while minimizing impulsive or inattentive ones. When a child is old enough, cognitive behavioral therapy can help teach a child to control his behaviors by understanding how his thoughts and feelings influence them.

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<sup>i</sup> Child Mind Institute (2015). Quick Facts on ADHD. <http://www.childmind.org/en/quick-facts-adhd/>

<sup>ii</sup> National Institute of Mental Health (2015). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Easy-to-Read). <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-easy-to-read/index.shtml>

<sup>iii</sup> Mental Health America (2015). ADHD and Kids. <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/adhd-and-kids>