

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



(ADHD)



All young kids have difficulty paying attention and will often do things without thinking.
But only a few of these kids have ADHD.

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood disorders and can continue through adolescents and adulthood.

What are the general signs of ADHD in children?

- Difficulty focusing on tasks without being distracted
- Difficulty following instructions and in organising tasks
- May lose things or become forgetful in daily activities
- Restless, overactive, fidgety
- Constantly chattering
- Continuously interrupting people and blurting out answers
- May find it hard to wait his/her turn in play, conversations or standing in line (queue)

The above signs may be observed in children frequently and usually do not mean the child has ADHD. It is when these signs become significantly more pronounced in one child, compared to other children of the same age, and when his/her behaviour undermines his/her school and social life, that the child may have ADHD.

Three types of ADHD. These are defined according to which symptoms stand out the most.

1. **Predominantly Inattentive Type**

The person finds it very difficult to organise or finish a task. They find it hard to pay attention to details and find it difficult to follow instructions or conversations.

2. **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type**

The person finds it hard to keep still - they fidget and talk a lot. A smaller child may be continually jumping, running or climbing. They are restless

and impulsive - interrupting others, grabbing things and speaking at inappropriate times. They have difficulty waiting their turn and find it hard to listen to directions. A person with this type of ADHD may have more injuries and/or accidents than others.

3. **Combined Type**

A person whose symptoms include all those of 1 and 2, and whose symptoms are equally predominant.

Diagnosis: To be considered for a diagnosis of ADHD:

- A child must display behaviours from one of the three subtypes before they are 12 years of age.
- The behaviours must be present for a minimum of 6 months and be beyond the extent that is normal for the child's age.
- The behaviours must happen in and negatively affect at least two areas of a child's life (such as school, home, childcare settings, or friendships)

Your child's psychologist will begin to gather information on the child's unusual behaviour. You will be asked about your child's development and behaviours at home, school and among friends. Standard evaluation forms, known as behaviour rating scales are filled out by the parents and the teachers, rating their observations of the child's behaviour. This will also assist in ruling out possible causes other than ADHD (such as medical conditions/hearing and vision, stress or a sudden change in the child's life, depression, anxiety, learning disability). An interview with his/her classroom teacher as well as observations in the clinic and at school will also be required.

Treatment for ADHD has two important components — psychotherapy interventions (for both the child and the parents) and medications. There is a significant amount of research demonstrating that medication alone may help with some immediate relief from some of the symptoms of ADHD, however, the child still often needs to learn the skills needed to be successful while living with the disorder. This is achieved through psychotherapy.