

Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention Deficit Disorder, with or without **Hyperactivity**, has been described as a condition when, compared with most children of the same age and sex, and in more than one setting, the child has a range of problem behaviours associated with poor attention span.

These can include

- inattentiveness
- impulsiveness, not thinking before saying or doing something
- restlessness
- hyperactivity, unable to control the amount of physical activity which is appropriate to a situation
- poor learning and socialising skills

Hyperkinetic Syndrome or Disorder is the term used by the World Health Organisation (the European Guidelines) when comparing extreme levels of motor activity in children with 'normal' peers. It is now recognised as a sub-category of AD/HD that applies to highly hyperactive children.

Three sub-types have been recognised

- ADD with hyperactivity (the 'impulsive-hyperactive' type)
- ADD without hyperactivity (the 'inattentive-impulsive' type)
- ADD – residual type (found in adults whose childhood symptoms persist after adolescence)

It is estimated that in the USA 5% of children may suffer from AD/HD. In the UK standards are organised in a different way and experts believe the rate here to be about 1.7%. The condition is more common in boys, who are also more likely to be hyperactive.

Attention Difficulties

A child must exhibit at least six of the following symptoms for at least six months:

Failing to pay close attention to detail and making careless errors; failing to finish tasks; appearing not to listen; failing to follow through instructions; disorganised; avoiding tasks requiring sustained mental effort; losing things e.g. pencils, books, toys; easily distracted; forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactivity

A child must exhibit at least three of the following symptoms for at least six months:

Runs around or excessively climbs over things; noisy or can't take part in quiet activities; unable to stay in a seat; fidgets with hands and feet or squirms on seat.

Impulsivity

A child must exhibit at least one of the following symptoms for at least six months:

Blurts out answers; fails to wait in lines, turn taking, group situations; interrupts others' conversations/games; talks excessively without regard to others.

ADHD children may also exhibit temper tantrums, sleep disorders, clumsiness, confrontational defiant disorder, conduct disorders, specific learning difficulties, severe clinical depression, and anxiety disorders.

Diagnosis and treatments

Diagnosis is by a doctor, usually a child or adolescent psychiatrist, a paediatrician or your GP. Other professionals should be consulted and evidence collected. Most experts favour a multi-modal approach toward treating and managing the disorder, recognising the co-existing conditions and the importance of treating all symptoms. Treatment may consist of management techniques for home and school, medication, psychological treatments, diet e.g. food allergies and supplements.

Drugs should only be prescribed by a doctor or consultant for true ADHD and they should be taken only as and when directed. Each individual reacts uniquely to medication: if one causes unwanted side effects (such as weight loss, headaches or insomnia) then consult your GP again: the amount given, the time it is given, or the drug itself may need changing. There are several well-known and tried drug treatments for addressing the problems posed to young people with ADHD. They can help increase attention, and reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity. There may also be some side effects.

At home your child will need

- structure and routines
- consistency
- clearly defined rules and boundaries
- deliberate eye contact when spoken to
- sanctions and rewards
- your patience
- your love

Your child was born like this; appreciate this. Do not use confrontation to change him: make your expectations realistic and give him your patience and time, but most of all make him feel valued and loved.

At school

Help create a structured environment so that these children have less problems with starting and completing tasks, making transitions, working with others, following directions, organising multi-faceted projects and maintaining attention. They need predictability, structure, short work periods, more individual instruction, positive reinforcement and an interesting curriculum.

Teachers should:

- appreciate and accept that the child cannot help himself: his behaviour is not prompted by naughtiness
- have positive expectations
- monitor progress regularly throughout the lesson
- give directions clearly and frequently, and wherever possible, visually (i.e. timetable)
- be consistent, firm, fair and patient and
- give constant feedback and rewards
- display 'classroom rules' which are unambiguous and written in a positive way
- make clear lists - these children need reminders they can access themselves
- repeat directions: write them, say them out loud more than once. Check that he understands
- use deliberate eye contact when speaking to him (almost 'staring')
- make sure he knows the boundaries: avoid long discussions about what is right and wrong in their behaviour: tell them what you want - give them the positives
- avoid timed tests; they will not tell you what he knows
- do not set lengthy homework tasks: go for quality
- break down each task into its smaller component parts
- allow 'time out' if required
- make learning FUN – all children hate being bored.

Other Useful Contacts:

ADDISS (Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service) provides information and support for parents, sufferers and professionals, keeps an extremely good book list and provide conferences and training.

Helpline 020 8952 2800 (10am-3pm)

Web: www.addiss.co.uk

Email: info@addiss.co.uk

They also run an on-line book shop selling books and DVD's at www.addiss-shop.com.

The Dore Achievement Centre, based in Kenilworth, Warks, help children and adults affected by learning difficulties, including ADD/ADHD, improve reading, writing and learning skills through an internet-based programme with exercises to improve the performance of the cerebellum. Tel: 01926 800010

Web: www.dore.co.uk

Email: info@dore.co.uk

The Hyperactive Children's Support Group supports a dietary approach to the problem of hyperactivity. They offer support to children & families & run inset days for schools/health professionals. Their website has lots of information on foods and substances that affect children and teenagers with ADHD/hyperactivity.

Web: www.hacsg.org.uk

Email: hacsg@hacsg.org.uk

Tel: 01243 539966 (10am-12.30pm except Wed 2.30-4.30)

Internet Sites

UK sites: Thanet ADDers on www.adders.org has lots of useful information and a list of local ADHD support groups run by parents. ADHD Family Support Group Milton Keynes on www.mkadhd.org.uk has superb info, tips, events and links useful wherever you live. The pharmaceutical company Janssen-Cilag have an informative ADHD website which has been produced with advice from a group of European specialists. To find it search google with the wording Janssen-Cilag ADHD.

USA sites: **LOADS of information sheets for children and adults at** www.help4adhd.org/en/about/wwk and www.addvance.com.

Reading

See also OASIS information sheet '**Books – where to find them**'

OASIS publishes **A First Guide to ADHD** in its First Guide series (price £5.00 plus p&p or you can download it free from our website). Publications list/order form available on our website, or email/telephone for one to be sent to you.

New books on ADHD are coming out all the time, contact -

Routledge Education (member of the Taylor Francis Group)

Tel: 020 7017 6563 (Marketing)

Web: www.routledgeeducation.com (academic and research based) or www.routledge.com for teachers.

Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Web: www.jkp.com

Email: post@jkp.com

Tel: 020 7833 2307

Sage Publications

For all professionals working in schools and educational settings (includes Paul Chapman Publishing and Lucky Duck books).

Web: www.sagepub.co.uk

Email: market@sagepub.co.uk

SEN Marketing

Books and software for special educational needs.

Web: www.senbooks.co.uk

Tel: 01924 871697

The internet book shop www.amazon.co.uk and **ADDISS** - see above.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Practical Guide for Teachers. Authors: Paul Cooper and Katherine Bilton. Available from ADDISS (see above), £17.00 + p&p. ISBN 9781853467318.

The ADHD Handbook: A Guide for Parents and Professionals.

Authors: Alison Munden and Jon Arcelus. Available from Jessica Kingsley Publishers (see above), £13.99 + p&p. ISBN 9781853027567.

The Ritalin Fact Book – What Your Doctor Won't Tell You about ADHD and Stimulant Drugs. Author Peter R Breggin, MD, 2003. Available from www.amazon.co.uk for £13.00 + p&p. ISBN 0 7382 0450 1.



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OASIS publications

- SEN Information Sheets
- First Guide to ...
- Cards explaining 9 learning disabilities
- Legal advice Information Sheets
- SEN 'How to' guides

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