

Serious Childhood Problems
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - Part 1
by Mike Witzky and Jym Ramage

This condition used to be called hyperactivity, but is now known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This condition affects many children, and while it is serious, it is also very successfully treated with medication and counseling.

One of the most commonly seen disorders in children is Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, also known as ADHD. It is estimated that between 3% and 10% of pre-adolescents suffer symptoms of ADHD. These symptoms are divided into two main groups, those that involve difficulties with attention span and concentration, and those that involve excessive activity and difficulties with calming down and remaining quiet. While all parents struggle at times with getting children to "Pay attention!" or "Settle down!," children with symptoms of ADHD have a much more difficult time with concentrating, calming down, or both. Unrecognized symptoms of ADHD significantly increase the likelihood of a child failing to achieve in school, having difficulty making and keeping friends, and of abusing alcohol and drugs or engaging in delinquent behaviors during adolescence.

The easiest to recognize symptoms of ADHD are those that include excessive activity and remaining quiet. Children with these symptoms often stand out in the early years of school, where they are less able to remain seated, or to refrain from annoying other students. Of course, all children do develop at their own pace, and in any class, some children will be less able to stay seated for longer periods or to follow the important rule of "keep your hands to yourself." Several things help distinguish ADHD symptoms from children who are just more active or less mature than their peers. One of the most significant is how long a child takes to change from a very active time, such as recess, gym class or other activity, to a quieter activity, such as sitting at their desk or doing schoolwork. At home, this may be the child that struggles with staying seated at dinner just after coming in from playing outside, or can't stay in bed after that pillow fight with a sibling. Another distinguishing characteristic of ADHD symptoms is that parents and teachers see very little results from using consequences for over-active behavior. A very active child who learns that not staying in his or her seat causes them to stay after school, or that getting out of bed after bedtime means they go to bed earlier the next night, will generally respond to such a consequence by making more successful efforts to stay seated or stay in bed. A child with the excessive activity symptoms of ADHD may make real efforts to control such behavior, but will be unable to master it. Suffering negative consequences alone will not help these children control such behavior.

If you think your child may have ADHD or if you have questions regarding ADHD, please go to the "*Find a Service Provider*" section of the BHG Web site <http://www.bhg.org> to locate a behavioral healthcare agency in your county.

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