

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Everybody can have a hard time sitting still or paying attention at times. For some people, sitting still or paying attention can be more difficult to control. These issues can impact every aspect of their lives: home, academic, social and work.

## What Is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a brain disorder that is an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity. This affects a person’s ability to focus, stay still and/or manage their behavior.

- 1. Inattention** means a person wanders off task, loses focus and may have problems staying organized. These problems are not due to defiance or confusion.
- 2. Hyperactivity** means a person seems to move about constantly. This may include excessive fidgeting, tapping or talking in situations that may not be appropriate.
- 3. Impulsivity** means a person makes hasty actions or decisions without considering the long-term effects. The effects of their actions may include risky behavior or self-harm. An impulsive person may be socially intrusive and excessively interrupt others.

Some people with ADHD may only have problems with one of the behaviors. Others with ADHD may have both inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity (combined).

## General Symptoms

The symptoms differ from person-to-person, but both children and adults can have ADHD.

### Child:

- Makes careless mistakes.
- Has difficulty sustaining attention.
- Does not appear to listen.
- Struggles to follow instructions.
- Has difficulty with organizing.
- Easily distracted.
- Is forgetful in daily activities.
- Fidgets with hands/feet or squirms in chair.
- Runs around or climbs excessively.
- Difficulty engaging in activities quietly.
- Talks excessively/blurts out answers.
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others.

### Adult:

- Poor attention, easily distracted.
- Physical restlessness.
- Excessive impulsivity.
- Chronic procrastination.
- Difficulty getting started on tasks.
- Difficulty completing tasks.
- Frequently losing things.
- Poor organizing, planning.
- Poor time management.
- Poor memory, attention span.



## DID YOU KNOW?

ADHD affects 11% of school-age children. More than 75% of children with ADHD continue to experience significant symptoms into adulthood.

## Screening Tools

**The Vanderbilt Assessment Scale:** This is a 55-question assessment tool that reviews signs and symptoms of ADHD. It screens for co-existing conditions. This may include conduct disorder, oppositional-defiant disorder, anxiety, depression and more.

**Swanson, Nolan, and Pelham (SNAP-IV) scale:** This assessment measures the core symptoms of ADHD in children and young adults.

## Best Practices

Treatment of ADHD falls into two main categories: Psychosocial or pharmacological.

Psychosocial interventions can be useful. This may include behavioral therapy, teaching social skills, parent/child education and appropriate school programming.

Pharmacological management most often includes prescribing stimulant or non-stimulant medication.

- **Stimulant** medication works by increasing the brain chemicals dopamine and norepinephrine. This plays an essential role in thinking and attention.
  - Stimulants are the best-known and most widely used ADHD medications. Between 70-80% of children with ADHD have fewer ADHD symptoms when taking these fast-acting medications.
- **Non-stimulant** medication takes longer to start working. However, non-stimulants can improve focus, attention and impulsivity in a person with ADHD.
  - Medications are effective for about 80% of children with ADHD.

Schedule a follow-up appointment within 30 days of initiating a prescription to treat ADHD in a child. Then schedule two additional follow-up appointments within the following 9 months. This is to ensure the medicine is effective.

## RESOURCES

For additional information about ADHD screening tools and other resources, go to:

- **Provider Toolkits:** [iowatotalcare.com/providertoolkits](http://iowatotalcare.com/providertoolkits)
- **Forms, Manuals and Resources:** [iowatotalcare.com/providers/resources.html](http://iowatotalcare.com/providers/resources.html)
- **HEDIS Quick Reference Guide/Reporting Accurate Diagnoses:** [iowatotalcare.com/providers/resources/forms-resources.html](http://iowatotalcare.com/providers/resources/forms-resources.html)
- **Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD):** [chadd.org/understanding-adhd/adhd-fact-sheets](http://chadd.org/understanding-adhd/adhd-fact-sheets)
- **CDC Symptoms of ADHD:** [cdc.gov/adhd/signs-symptoms/index.html](http://cdc.gov/adhd/signs-symptoms/index.html)
- **Cleveland Clinic:** [my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/11766-adhd-medication](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/11766-adhd-medication)

## ADHD Treatment Type Estimates

### ADHD Pharmacological

Varies from 38% to 81% of patients.

### ADHD Behavioral Therapy

Varies from 39% to 62% of patients.