



UNITED
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

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Can't concentrate. Can't focus. Don't get it. Understanding ADHD

Contrary to what you might hear from your relatives or your child's teachers, ADHD is not the result of bad parenting, or an excuse for not doing schoolwork. More than 95 years of studies have found a group of people who have difficulty with:

- Concentration
- Impulsivity
- Hyperactivity (not in all cases)

This group of symptoms is known as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and is recognized by every major

professional medical, psychiatric, psychological and educational association, as well as the United States Department of Education, the Office for Civil Rights, the United States Congress, and the National Institutes of Health.¹

Overflowing and Sometimes Overwhelmed

Many children with ADHD can't sit still, blurt the answers in class and never stop talking. Homework arrives in tatters or not at all, even when the child sweated over it the night before. Many kids with ADHD struggle every day just to fit in.

Not all children (or adults) with ADHD are hyperactive. People with ADHD can also hyperfocus: they notice the tiniest details in the world around them and remember details from week-old conversations.

They may sink so deeply into what they're doing that they don't hear Mom calling them for dinner, Dad saying, "Time to go," or the teacher announcing that it's time to start the quiz.

As Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., wrote in his 1992 article on attention deficit disorder: "You get one idea and you have to act on it, and then, what do you know, but you've got another idea before you've finished up with the first one, and so you go for that one, but of course a third idea intercepts the second, and you just have to follow that one, and pretty soon people are calling you disorganized and impulsive and all sorts of impolite words that miss the point completely."²

Getting Help

If you think your child might have ADHD, the place to begin is with an in-depth

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Homework without Hair Pulling

For kids with ADHD, the challenges of homework seem extra-large. Try these three ingredients for success:

- 1. Planner.** Visit your local office supply store. Help your student find a planner that has room to write down assignments for every class. Set up a time to review homework and due dates.
- 2. Binder system.** Set up a three-ring binder with a folder for each class. Add a labeled "TURN THIS IN" folder for work that's headed back to class.
- 3. Homework spot.** Set aside a place to do homework. Make sure the space is free of distractions. Some students work well with music, but Instant Messages, texting and e-mail should be off limits until homework is done.
- 4. Frequent breaks.** Use a timer to help students balance work time and rest breaks for stretching or a quick snack.

Upcoming Articles

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Depression and Seasonal Affective Disorder

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Anger Management

evaluation by a trained professional. There is no test for ADHD, so parents and teachers fill out checklists to paint a complete picture of the child's life at home and at school. Other tests show the child's emotional functioning and developmental level. A complete medical exam can uncover any medical factor that might mimic the symptoms of ADHD.

Many Kinds of Treatment

"The best thing you can do for my son," one mother

says, "is to believe that he is trying as hard as he can to be like you, even though he doesn't think the way you do."

That having been said, many professionals recommend a multimodal approach in treating children and teens with ADHD. Multimodal treatment includes some or all of the following:

- Parent training and education
- Positive reinforcement to help the child learn

desirable behaviors at home and at school

- An appropriate educational program, with special education intervention if needed
- Structure: calendars, clocks, folders and planners are just some of the tools children, parents and teachers can use

Many children and adults with ADHD benefit from medication as part of their treatment.³ Remember, only a medical doctor can

recommend and prescribe the stimulant and/or nonstimulant medication that can help a child with ADHD.

Whether you're parenting a child or teen with ADHD, or you're an adult with ADHD (see next article), you don't have to go it alone. UBH is here to help. Call or log on any time for help with any of life's challenges.

I'm an Adult – Is This AD/HD?

If you think you have ADHD, you may be right! Many people who have ADHD in childhood do not outgrow it. Others don't discover that they have ADHD until much later in life. Some people find ways to compensate for their poor attention, impulsivity and distractibility, or find a career that fits.

Does this sound familiar to you?

- I'm easily distracted.
- I'm impulsive and don't always consider the consequences before I act.
- I have trouble paying attention.
- I have a hard time staying on task.

- I start many projects but have trouble finishing.
- I feel irritable a lot.
- I have trouble falling asleep and difficulty waking up.⁴

If you or someone you love has some or all of these

symptoms, and they interfere with your day-to-day life, job or relationships, it may be ADHD. Your care provider can help — and so can UBH. Log on or call for more information.



Resources

United Behavioral Health

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

www.liveandworkwell.com

Visit the ADHD Mental Health Condition Center for additional information and resources regarding this topic.

The information and therapeutic approaches in this article are provided for educational purposes only and are not meant to be used in place of professional clinical consultations for individual health needs. Certain treatments may not be covered in some benefit plans. Check your health plan regarding your coverage of services. UBH does not endorse any particular third-party Web site but simply offers examples of some of the more common sites available.

1 Attention Deficit Disorder Association, <http://www.add.org>.

2 Hallowell, E. "What's It Like to Have ADD?" 1992. Available at <http://www.add.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=97175>.

3 CHADD, <http://www.chadd.org/Content/CHADD/Understanding/Treatment/default.html>.

4 Attention Deficit Disorder Association, <http://www.add.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=97174>.