



# Mental Health Comprehensive Services

Providing Family Stability and Developing Life Coping Skills

## Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood disorders and can continue through adolescence and adulthood. Symptoms include difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and hyperactivity (over-activity). One of the first questions a parent will have is "Why? What went wrong?" "Did I do something to cause this?" There is little compelling evidence at this time that ADHD can arise purely from social factors or child-rearing methods. Most substantiated causes appear to fall in the realm of genetics.

### Symptoms

Inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity are the key behaviors of ADHD. It is normal for all children to be inattentive, hyperactive, or impulsive sometimes, but for children with ADHD, these behaviors are more severe and occur more often.

Children who have symptoms of **inattention** may:

- Be easily distracted, miss details, forget things, and frequently switch from one activity to another
- Have difficulty focusing on one thing
- Become bored with a task after only a few minutes, unless they are doing something enjoyable
- Have difficulty focusing attention on organizing and completing a task or learning something new
- Have trouble completing or turning in homework assignments, often losing things (e.g., pencils, toys, assignments) needed to complete tasks or activities
- Not seem to listen when spoken to
- Daydream, become easily confused, and move slowly
- Have difficulty processing information as quickly and accurately as others
- Struggle to follow instructions.

Children who have symptoms of **hyperactivity** may:

- Fidget and squirm in their seats
- Talk nonstop
- Dash around, touching or playing with anything and everything in sight
- Have trouble sitting still during dinner, school, and story time
- Be constantly in motion
- Have difficulty doing quiet tasks or activities.

Children who have symptoms of **impulsivity** may:

- Be very impatient
- Blurt out inappropriate comments, show their emotions without restraint, and act without regard for consequences.
- Have difficulty waiting for things they want or waiting their turns in games
- Often interrupt conversations or others' activities.

### Which Treatment Should My Child Have?

For children with ADHD, no single treatment is the answer for every child. Each child's needs and personal history must be carefully considered. It is important that the child receive a thorough examination and appropriate diagnosis by a well-qualified professional. If you think your child may be experiencing any of these symptoms, please contact the counselors at Mental Health Comprehensive Services for a confidential evaluation.

For more information on this article, go to: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder/complete-index.shtml>