

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is a condition of the brain that makes it difficult for a child to control their behavior to the point that it interferes with their day-to-day life.¹ It's not something they can help or *control* on their own.²

ADHD has three different classifications:

Inattentive-only children struggle with activities that require concentration.

Hyperactive/impulsive children cannot control their impulses.

Combined inattentive/hyperactive/impulsive children struggle with behaviors from both.

Recognizing ADHD:

The most common symptoms of ADHD are behaviors linked to inattentiveness, *hyperactivity*, and impulsiveness. All children behave like this from time to time, but for children with ADHD, these symptoms affect them every day.²

There are certain criteria that must be met for a diagnosis of ADHD. However, there are no blood tests or x-rays to find them. If you recognize ADHD behaviors in your child, it is important to get an official diagnosis from a professional. You can start with your medical provider who can refer you to a *specialist*. Not getting a diagnosis can delay your child getting the treatment they need.

Some Truths About ADHD:

- ADHD can be seen as early as the preschool years.⁴
- ADHD children are not being lazy, unmotivated, or just being kids. ADHD symptoms and behaviors are frequent and interfere with a child's ability to manage their daily life.⁴
- Your parenting did not cause your child's ADHD. However, good parenting skills, like setting and enforcing limits, creating *structure*, and using consistency and follow-through will make it easier for your child to manage their ADHD.⁵
- ADHD is not cured or outgrown, but your child can go on to live a productive, happy, and successful life if they're taught to manage their symptoms.⁴

Parenting Strategies:

Work with Your Provider. Start first with your medical provider. They will test your child for ADHD. And then follow-through on the treatments they suggest. Many experts believe that consistency in managing a child's behavior, with or without ADHD-specific medications, are the keys to your child's success. Your provider will develop a treatment plan with you.

Practice behavior therapy. How you respond to your child's behavior can help you to work through the challenges of ADHD. Behavior therapy focuses on your reactions and what you can do to help your child grow and learn.⁶ Some great ways you can work with your child are to reward good behavior, ignore negative behavior, delay rewards until your child completes tasks, and lastly, remove triggers that cause unwanted behaviors.

Create organization and routines. Use consistent routines that they can count on, such as bedtime routines, morning routines, and homework routines. Use charts or checklists for daily things that they typically forget. Set small, achievable goals or break down big tasks into steps. Checking off the tasks when they finish them gives your child a sense of accomplishment.

Work with your child's teacher or school. Working together, you can come up with strategies that are consistent both at home and at school.

What You Need:

Parenting a child with a behavioral condition is hard.⁶ It WILL test your patience. There are ways to help you cope and here are just a few to get you started:

- Be kind to yourself.
- Take a break when your patience is tested.
- Develop a good support system.
- Learn as much as you can about ADHD.

With a good plan from your provider, your understanding and patience at home, and your child's teacher working with you, your child will build the skills they need to function and do well both now and in the future.⁸

Resources include:

1. American Academy of Pediatrics. ADHD. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed 6/13/2019.
2. American Academy of Pediatrics. Understanding ADHD. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Understanding-ADHD.aspx>, accessed 6/13/2019.
3. American Academy of Pediatrics. Early Warning Signs of ADHD. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Early-Warning-Signs-of-ADHD.aspx>, accessed 6/13/2019.
4. American Academy of Pediatrics. ADHD Myths and Misconceptions. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Myths-and-Misconceptions.aspx>, accessed 6/13/2019.
5. American Academy of Pediatrics. Causes of ADHD. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Causes-of-ADHD.aspx>, accessed 6/13/2019.
6. American Academy of Pediatrics. Behavior Therapy for Children with ADHD. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Behavior-Therapy-Parent-Training.aspx>, accessed 6/13/2019.
7. Zeigler Dendy, C. Attitude. How Teachers Can Help Every Student with ADHD Shine. Found at <https://www.additudemag.com/teaching-strategies-for-students-with-adhd/>, accessed 6/13/2019.
8. Williams, Glenda, MD. Pediatrician – Interview.