



## Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a condition that becomes apparent in some children in the preschool and early school years. It is hard for these children to control their behavior and/or pay attention. It is estimated that between 3 and 5 percent of children have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or approximately 2 million children in the United States. This means that in a classroom of 24 to 30 children, it is likely that at least one will have ADHD.

ADHD is not considered to be a learning disability. It can be determined to be a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), making a student eligible to receive special education services. However, ADHD falls under the category "Other Health Impaired" and not under "Specific Learning Disabilities."

Many children with ADHD – approximately 20 to 30 percent – also have a specific learning disability.

The principle characteristics of ADHD are **inattention**, **hyperactivity**, and **impulsivity**. There are three subtypes of ADHD recognized by professionals. These are the **predominantly hyperactive/impulsive type** (that does not show significant inattention); The **predominantly inattentive type** (that does not show significant hyperactive-impulsive behavior) sometimes called ADD; and the **combined type** (that displays both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms).

Other disorders that sometimes accompany ADHD are Tourette Syndrome (affecting a very small proportion of people with ADHD); oppositional defiant disorder (affecting as many as one-third to one-half of all children with ADHD); conduct disorder (about 20 to 40% of ADHD children); anxiety and depression; and bipolar disorder.

\*National Institute of Mental Health, 2003

## *Signs and Symptoms*

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- May have poorly formed letters or words or messy writing
- Has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
- Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork or chores
- Avoids or strongly dislikes tasks (such as schoolwork) that require sustained mental effort
- Forgetful in daily activities
- Has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Loses things necessary for tasks or activities (pencils, assignments, tools)
- Shows difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
- Acts as if "driven by a motor" and cannot remain still
- Blurts out answers to questions before the questions have been completed, often interrupts others

## *Strategies*

- Allow a child to change work sites frequently while completing homework or studying
- Assign tasks involving movement such as passing out papers, running errands, watering plants
- Use music as a tool for transitioning, song = task
- Vary tone of voice: loud, soft, whisper
- Stage assignments and divide work into smaller chunks with frequent breaks
- Teach students to verbalize a plan before solving problems or undertaking a task
- Permit a child to do something with hands while engaged in sustained listening: stress ball, worry stone, paper folding, clay
- Use inconspicuous methods such as a physical cue to signal a child when she or he tunes out
- Provide opportunities for student to show divergent, creative, imaginary thinking and get peer recognition for originality
- Employ multi-sensory strategies when directions are given and lessons presented

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4156 Library Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349  
Phone (412) 341-1515 Fax (412) 344-0224  
www.LDAAmerica.org

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