

ADD or AD/HD is generally considered to be a neurobiological disorder. Researchers believe that the symptoms of ADD and AD/HD are caused by chemicals in the brain not working properly. It is characterized by the inability to sustain focused attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity.

The symptoms must be present for at least six months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent with a child's developmental level. In addition, some symptoms must be present prior to age seven, and in two or more settings (e.g., at school, social settings and home). At least 6 symptoms are necessary for a diagnosis to be made by a physician. **If your child exhibits at least 6 symptoms in either category, contact your pediatrician or physician.

Listed below are the symptoms for INATTENTION (At least 6 necessary)

- *Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- *Often has difficulty sustaining attention on tasks or play activities
- *Often does not listen when spoken to directly
- *Often does not follow through on instructions or fails to finish work
- *Often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- *Often avoids, dislikes or reluctant to engage in tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- *Often loses things
- *Often distracted by extraneous stimuli
- *Often forgetful in daily activities

Listed below are symptoms for HYPERACTIVITY and IMPULSIVITY (At least 6 necessary)

- *Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
- *Often has difficulty remaining seated when required to do so
- *Often runs or climbs excessively
- *Often has difficulty playing quietly
- *Often "on the go"
- *Often talks excessively
- *Often blurts out answers to questions before they have been completed
- *Often has difficulty awaiting turn
- *Often interrupts or intrudes others

Proactive Techniques for ADD or AD/HD Challenges

ADD or AD/HD children have patterns of attracting negative responses. This sets the wheels in motion for them to become locked into becoming super-sensitive and hypercritical of their own experiences. As parents, our job is to teach them skills to avoid falling into this trap. We must help them learn proper perspective, as well as point out the positive aspects of their behavior. Otherwise, they come to expect their socialization efforts to fail even before beginning.

(cont. above)



One of the most successful techniques for those with ADD or AD/HD is proactive recognition. Simply put, it is the opposite of finger pointing, berating and criticizing. It is catching someone in the act of doing something good. When parents point out the positive aspects of their kids' behavior and choices, the behavior is more likely to be repeated. Parents benefit from proactive recognition because we show our children their self-worth and give ourselves opportunities to praise worthy actions. The family soon lives a self-fulfilling prophecy. When we praise positive behavior, we see more positive behavior. The opposite can be seen in kids who never get positive reinforcement.

Start with selecting one or two areas where improvement is needed. Work diligently on offering positive feedback in these target areas. After two weeks your ADHD'er should have made progress towards assimilating the compliment-gathering behaviors into his or her daily routine and you can choose different behavior that needs proactive recognition.

Strive to give at least the same amount of energy discussing successful, positive accomplishments as you do reminding of rules and goals. Talk about how he/she could have made better choices or handled frustrations while playing with friend, for example. Then end on the upbeat note of complimenting your child, for example, on his kindheartedness and hospitality during the visit. It is our duty to reinforce our expectations and rules. It is equally important that we point out desirable behaviors.

Humor is another valuable technique that diffuses potentially explosive situations. And redirecting your child to another topic or activity will get your challenging child's mind engaged on something completely different.

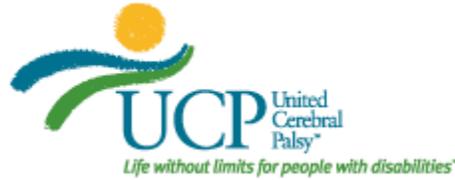
Did you know that...

- * AD/HD is 5 to 7 times more common in boys
- * AD/HD occurs in people of every level of intelligence
- * AD/HD tends to run in families, and there is an association with a family history of alcoholism and/or depression
- * ADHD children often show considerable ability with artistic endeavors, but may have difficulty forming symbols (writing) unless "drawing", going very slowly and precisely

Final Thoughts

Even though most don't outgrow AD/HD, people do learn to adapt and live fulfilling lives. With effective combinations of medicine, new skills, and emotional support, people with AD/HD can develop ways to control their attention and minimize their disruptive behaviors. As they grow up, with appropriate help from parents and clinicians, children with AD/HD become better able to suppress their hyperactivity and to channel it into more socially acceptable behaviors.

All people with AD/HD have natural talents and abilities that they can draw on to create fine lives and careers for themselves. In fact, many people with AD/HD even feel that their patterns of behavior give them unique, often unrecognized, advantages. People with AD/HD tend to be outgoing and ready for action. Because of their drive for excitement and stimulation, many become successful in business, sports, construction, and public speaking. Because of their ability to think about many things at once, many have won acclaim as artists and inventors. Many choose work that gives them freedom to move around and release excess energy. But some find ways to be effective in quieter, more sedentary careers



Information supplied by:

**Childcare Enhancement
With A Purpose
(CCEP)**

**Stephanie Eger
Project Coordinator**

**Amelia Hardin
Dee McNalley
Developmental Specialists**

**United Cerebral Palsy
of Huntsville & TN Valley
256.859.4900**



United Cerebral Palsy

**Understanding Disabilities
Creating Opportunities**

Information on ADD or AD/HD



Having ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or AD/HD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is like being put into a dark room with things scattered around to trip you. You don't get a flashlight, but everyone else does. You trip around the room, bumping into things, until you finally learn the layout of the room. Then someone moves you to a new room, and the process starts again.

It's like having a whirlwind in your mind. Everything seems to be blowing around and nothing stays put. Some people have compared the feeling to watching someone change the channels on the TV every few seconds. You can get a general idea of what is going on, but you miss most of the content. People with ADD or AD/HD tend to be socially blind. They may miss rules and structures which other people see much more readily.

In the last decade, scientists have learned much about the cause of the disorder and are now able to identify and treat people who have it. Here is some information which might prove to be useful to you if you have concerns about your child being very "active".

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