

ABOUT ADD/ADHD

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental (related to brain function) condition that is usually diagnosed in childhood. It can last into adulthood. Symptoms include difficulty staying focused or paying attention, excess motor activity (eg, fidgeting), and difficulty controlling impulsive behavior.

Although most children have these problems some of the time, the diagnosis is made when these symptoms are more severe and persistent than is expected for the child's age and developmental level.

ADD/ADHD may cause a child to make poor grades in school or get in trouble due to behavior in class.

It is important to know that ADHD is a biological condition and not due to poor parenting or a child having bad behavior on purpose.

ADHD has different subtypes. Some people have hyperactivity and impulsivity as well as trouble paying attention; other people have mostly symptoms of inattention. Although they may sit quietly, such individuals are not paying attention when they need to, such as in school or while doing homework. Among these people, the diagnosis of ADHD may be missed or delayed.

GETTING STARTED

Initial Evaluations:

Completion of the Vanderbilt Survey will help us to determine if your child has ADD, ADHD or a combination of both. We will have a discussion about the different options and see what you want to do to help your child.

Some parents may not want to start with medication, just get the diagnosis.

If you want to initiate a stimulant medication (examples are Vyvanse, Focalin, Concerta, etc.), we will start with obtaining blood work, and EKG and chest x-ray. Results are required before we can start medication. If there is an abnormal EKG or CXR, we will need clearance from cardiology before getting started.

Follow up Evaluations:

Once medication is started, we are required by the DEA to follow up in 30 days to evaluate the effectiveness of the medication before refilling it.

Once we have a medication and dose that is effective and working well, we are allowed to follow up every 90 days per the DEA. Refills are not sent, but separate prescriptions that will last for 90 days.

ADD/ADHD evaluations are not able to be conducted during a wellness visit, they are a separate visit.



ADD/ADHD Evaluation

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SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of ADHD may include:

Inattention

- Problems focusing
- Not paying attention to details
- Making careless mistakes
- Being distracted or bored easily
- Being forgetful and losing things
- Not finishing tasks

Hyperactivity

- Fidgeting and restless
- Talking too much
- Running around or moving when not appropriate
- Impulsivity
- Impatience
- Interrupting often
- Daydreaming
- Acting before thinking

SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

Your child's teacher may be the first to notice that there are problems in learning, completing work, or behavior. The school can help get an evaluation and provide special services if your child needs them.

You may consider asking your child's teacher to complete a Vanderbilt Survey to help in the ADD/ADHD evaluation. Their input may be helpful with initial or follow up evaluations.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of ADHD is made by evaluating the frequency and severity of several symptoms together and also whether the person is not doing as well at school or work or getting along with other people as would be expected. To be significant, a symptom must have started before age 7 years, be present for at least 6 months, and not be due to another cause. The health care provider will find out about behavior at home and school as well as performance at school or work.

Other problems that can lead to similar symptoms include impaired hearing or vision, learning disabilities, or temporary reactions to difficult events such as the loss of a parent or parents' divorce.

PROGNOSIS

Sometimes hyperactivity decreases with age. Other times the diagnosis is not made until adolescence or adulthood, although the disorder began in childhood. Most people with ADHD can lead independent lives.

TREATMENT

There are two methods of treatment for ADD & ADHD. One treatment is the use of behavioral modification therapy. Some people may be helped with addition of behavioral therapy. It can also be used in conjunction with medication.

Some people respond well to medication. The most common medication used is a stimulant. Even though this seems strange, the stimulant helps the parts of the brain involved in focusing attention and resisting impulses. There are many different forms of stimulants, and a person may react better to one than to another. Side effects may include decreased appetite, problems sleeping, or headaches and stomach aches. We also monitor blood pressures and effects of the medication on growth.

Neither use of medication nor therapy cure ADHD, but they do help manage the symptoms and help the person to be successful. Dietary treatments (such as limiting sugar, certain dyes and caffeine) do not have scientific evidence that they work, but have been found to help symptoms.