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Childhood ADHD: What You Should Know from a Family Physician

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the name of a group of behaviors that cause individuals to have trouble paying attention in school, at home or at work.

ADHD affects 4 to 12 percent of school-age children, and it is more common in boys than girls. People with ADHD may be much more active and/or impulsive than what is typical for others their own age. These behaviors can contribute to significant problems in relationships, learning and behavior.

“Parents do not always realize that ADHD symptoms can vary depending on a child’s age, and not every child will have all the same symptoms,” said Dr. Brian Bachelder, a family physician in Mt. Gilead, Ohio. “Any six of nine symptoms can indicate inattention and hyperactivity. I am suspicious when the combination is severe enough to interfere with normal developmental goals or expected learning standards,” said Bachelder.

Children with ADHD do not make enough chemicals in the key areas of the brain that are responsible for organizing thought. Without enough of these chemicals, the organizing centers of the brain do not work well. Research shows that ADHD is more common in children who have close relatives with the disorder. Recent research also links ADHD to smoking and other substance abuse during pregnancy.

The best way to help a child is to work with his teachers and doctors. Children with ADHD tend to need more structure and clearer expectations. Medication is the mainstay of therapy for these children. Although unproven, some clinicians recommend counseling or structured therapy. Parents are encouraged to discuss treatment options with a family physician.

Perception medicines that help improve attention and concentration and decrease impulsive and overactive behaviors may have side effects; therefore, it is important to take all prescription medicine exactly as directed by a family physician.

“I recommend beginning with ‘stimulant’ medications and specifically use the long-acting forms to avoid the need to take medications to school,” said Bachelder.

People with ADHD should be checked regularly by their family physicians. Some people only need short-term treatment, while others need treatment into adulthood.

The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,400 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.



FACT SHEET

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Symptoms of ADHD

A child suffering from ADHD and who is inattentive will have more than six of the following symptoms:

- Difficulty following instructions
- Difficulty keeping attention on work or play activities at school or home
- Loosing items needed for activities at school and home
- Appearing not to listen
- Not paying close attention to details
- Seeming disorganized
- Having trouble with tasks that require planning ahead
- Forgetting things
- Being easily distracted

A child with ADHD and who is hyperactive/impulsive will have at least six of the following symptoms:

- Is fidgety
- Runs or climbs inappropriately
- Cannot play quietly
- Blurts out answers
- Interrupts people
- Cannot stay seated
- Talks too much
- Is always “on the go”
- Has trouble waiting his turn

What You Can do at Home to Help Your Child

- Make a schedule
- Set simple house rules
- Make sure directions are understood
- Reward good behavior
- Supervise your child at all times
- Watch your child around his friends
- Set a homework routine
- Focus on effort, not grades
- Talk with your child’s teachers

Online Resources: www.familydoctor.org