

Eyes on



ADHD

Helping your child to pay attention



PARENTS



Centre of Excellence
for Early Childhood
Development

STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE
CLUSTER ON EARLY

child development



“Although ADHD is usually diagnosed in school-age children, the first symptoms often appear in preschool years.”

What do we know?

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) emerges in childhood and affects roughly 5-8% of individuals worldwide.
- Although ADHD is usually diagnosed in school-age children, the first symptoms often appear in preschool years.
- There are 3 types of ADHD symptoms:
 - inattention
 - hyperactive and impulsive
 - a combination of the above.
- ADHD is diagnosed by a health care professional with input from parents and teachers and takes many factors into account.
- Boys are more likely than girls to be diagnosed with ADHD.
- Preschool-age children with ADHD often have severe tantrums, low self-control (e.g., difficulty waiting for turn, interrupting), and impulsive, uncooperative or aggressive behaviour.
- School-age children with ADHD often have oppositional or aggressive behaviours, learning or language disabilities, sleep difficulties, mood disorders and anxiety.
- Even if ADHD symptoms seem to lessen with time, the difficulties they cause children can last a long time and can affect how well they do at school, and how well they get along with peers and family.
- ADHD can last into the teen and adult years and can lead to school dropout, conduct problem, interpersonal conflicts and work, justice or mental health problems.
- ADHD is caused by both genetic and environmental factors. The structure, circuitry and chemistry of the brain of people with ADHD tend to differ from individuals without ADHD.
- Risk factors include: a parent with ADHD, parenting difficulties, or a mother who smoked or drank while pregnant or who suffers from depression. Children with low birth weight and those with developmental problems and cognitive deficits who live in underprivileged areas are also more at risk for developing ADHD.
- With a combination of proper support, behaviour therapy and medication (in more severe cases), children’s concentration, impulse control and calmness can be improved.

Paying attention to... What can be done?

... how well your child can concentrate, be calm and think before acting.

- Consult a health professional if you notice that your child has difficulties in one or more areas of his life (e.g., at home, in school) and if it affects his functioning.
- Seek a professional assessment to identify factors that might contribute to your child's problems or mimic ADHD symptoms (e.g., sleep problems, stress).
- Set a routine and keep a safe, consistent and relaxing home environment.

... feedback from your child's educator/teacher.

- Listen to warning signs that your child might have ADHD such as:
 - Having disruptive behaviour.
 - Being unable to follow routines and simple instructions.
 - Being unable to stay on task.
 - Taking longer to complete a task.
 - Having difficulty organizing himself.
 - Forgetting things.
 - Having poor peer interactions.

... your child's set of cognitive skills known as executive functions.

- Involve your child in physical or social activities that exercise impulse control and cognitive flexibility. Activities such as martial arts, yoga and music will help him learn to control himself and his emotions.
- Look for reputable computer games that exercise your child's working memory.
- Engage your child in social pretend play (e.g., playing school or store) and goal-directed games that are fun and challenging (e.g., Simon says).

... treatment options.

- Learn how to best manage your child's behaviour. Encourage your child's educator/teacher to use the same methods.
- If recommended (by a physician knowledgeable about ADHD), combine prescribed medication with behaviour therapy.
- Medication should be closely monitored by your physician and dosage might be adjusted over time (e.g., with age, weight).
- When needed, encourage your child to continue to take his medication. Consult your physician if you plan to stop medication.



Information

This information sheet is a publication of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) and the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development (SKC-ECD). These organizations identify and summarize the best scientific work on early childhood development. They disseminate this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of ADHD, consult our synthesis and experts' articles on this topic in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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In this document, the masculine form is used merely to simplify the text. No discrimination is intended.

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