

How to avoid misdiagnosis

ADHD symptoms can also have other causes, including anxiety, trauma or a learning disability. Children should be carefully evaluated to avoid misdiagnosis. Kids who are among the youngest in their class are sometimes misdiagnosed with ADHD because they're less mature than their classmates.

Other disorders and ADHD

Close to half of children with ADHD also have another mental health issue like anxiety or depression, or a learning disorder. This is called having a "comorbid" disorder. If you suspect your child may be struggling with more than ADHD, share your concerns with their doctor.



How is ADHD treated?

Once a child has been diagnosed, a clinician will likely suggest one or more of the following treatment options:

- Medication
- Therapy
- School supports or accommodations
- Parent training to learn techniques for managing behavior

ADHD treatment is not one-size-fits-all, and finding the right approach might take some time. But with support and patience, kids with ADHD can excel.



For more resources on ADHD in English and Spanish, visit the Child Mind Institute's Family Resource Center at childmind.org/resources

The Child Mind Institute is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders by giving them the help they need to thrive. We're here to provide clear, accurate information to help you feel confident, comfortable and empowered when it comes making decisions about your child's mental health.



ADHD in Kids: Quick Facts

Symptoms of ADHD, how it's diagnosed and treated, and tips for supporting children and teenagers with ADHD



What is ADHD?

Children with ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) find it unusually difficult to concentrate on tasks, pay attention, sit still and control their behavior. ADHD affects around 5% of children worldwide. It is diagnosed in kids as young as six, but older kids and adults can also be diagnosed. Treatments for ADHD can be very helpful.

Who can have ADHD?

ADHD affects all genders equally, but boys are more likely to be diagnosed than girls. Kids with ADHD are not always hyperactive or impulsive. If they're the inattentive type, which includes many girls, they can be dismissed as “dreamers” and overlooked or misdiagnosed.



What are the symptoms of ADHD?

There are three types of ADHD: inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive and combined.

Signs that a child might have inattentive ADHD include:

- Making careless mistakes
- Being easily distracted
- Not seeming to be listening when spoken to
- Having difficulty following instructions, especially those with multiple steps
- Having trouble getting organized
- Avoiding or disliking sustained effort
- Getting frustrated easily
- Being forgetful or always losing things

Signs that a child might have hyperactive-impulsive ADHD include:

- Fidgeting or squirming
- Trouble sitting still
- Constantly running around or climbing on things
- Trouble playing quietly
- Extreme impatience
- Excessive talking or interrupting, like blurting out answers in class
- Trouble managing emotions
- Crying often or seeming to be very sensitive

Children who have combined ADHD show symptoms of both hyperactive and inattentive ADHD.

Do kids grow out of ADHD?

No. ADHD is a life-long condition, but some symptoms change or cause fewer issues as kids get older. With treatment and practical strategies to manage their symptoms, people with ADHD can thrive.

Does ADHD affect kids outside of school?

Yes. ADHD can cause problems at home, in activities like sports, and with friends, as well as at school. The struggles caused by the disorder can also have a big impact on kids' self-esteem, causing them to feel ashamed, embarrassed and frustrated. Helping your child understand how to manage their ADHD can help.

Does ADHD cause behavior problems?

Children with ADHD often act out or have tantrums because it's hard for them to manage strong emotions. Their behavior can be confusing and frustrating for parents. It helps to provide extra structure, clear instructions and praise for positive behavior.

Who can diagnose ADHD?

ADHD can be diagnosed by any doctor or mental health professional, including pediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, neurologists, and social workers.