



MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Children: A Guide for Parents

What is ADHD?

Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) often have difficulty with the following:

- Focusing during certain tasks or activities
- Starting or completing tasks that are longer than others
- Avoiding distractions
- Staying still
- Speaking or acting without thinking

The exact cause of ADHD is not clear, although it begins in childhood and seems to run in families. ADHD is **not** caused by eating too much sugar or by food additives, allergies, or immunizations. Children with ADHD may have problems with academic achievement, personal well-being, and socializing with peers. If ADHD is untreated, it is likely to be a problem in adulthood.

What should I do if I have concerns my child may have ADHD?

Talk to your pediatrician about getting an evaluation with your clinic's pediatric psychologist. There are many reasons children struggle in school or have attention problems, and it is very important to look into all of these areas to create the best treatment plan for your child.

If your child earns poor grades, scores low on standardized tests, or has major behavior problems at school, you should request an evaluation for an **Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)**. An IEP provides your child extra support

in school. Ask your child's pediatrician or psychologist for a letter you can submit to the school to start an evaluation.

How does the evaluation work?

Evaluations take place with the pediatric psychologist. You and your child's teacher will complete forms and bring them to your visit with the psychologist. Results are usually available the same day.

In addition to the forms, please bring the following to your visit with the psychologist:

- Report card
- Standardized testing scores
- School disciplinary reports
- Other school reports or records
- Any reports from medical or mental health providers outside Michigan Medicine

What treatments are available if my child is diagnosed with ADHD?

The best treatment for children with ADHD depends on their age and specific concerns. Your child's pediatrician and psychologist will help determine the best treatment plan based on their needs. Treatment options may include behavior therapy, medication, and extra support services at school.

Your regular follow-up with your child's pediatrician or psychologist is a key part of treatment.

What is behavior therapy and how does it work for children with ADHD?

Behavior therapy is a set of techniques designed to change the child's behavior by reshaping their environment. Parents are the key part of the treatment and are taught to use these techniques with their children.

Research shows behavior therapy is highly effective for treating ADHD and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends it for all children with ADHD. At Michigan Medicine, our psychologists are highly trained in behavior therapy and are available on-site to provide care to your family.

What if my child is *not* diagnosed with ADHD but still has problems?

Your pediatric psychologist will continue to work with your child to treat problem areas no matter the results of the evaluation.

Medication for ADHD is the only treatment that cannot be prescribed to your child without a diagnosis.

Please feel free to contact our office with any questions or concerns you have.

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