

ADHD in CHILDREN



The Mecca of Black Wellness



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Does your child seem to have a difficult time sitting still or paying attention? Is homework frequently lost or misplaced? Does your child have a difficult time following instructions? Does your child frequently interrupt others or have a difficult time being quiet? If you have noticed a consistent display of extremely active, inattentive, and/or impulsive behaviors, it is possible that your child has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

ADHD is not a choice. ADHD is a neurobiological disorder, which is often first diagnosed during childhood, but also impacts many adolescents and adults. If your child has ADHD that does not mean that he or she is not smart. It is not caused by a poor diet, too much sugar, or the use of too much technology although those things can increase the severity of the ADHD symptoms. Some children and adolescents with ADHD display primarily inattentive behaviors, while others display more hyperactive and impulsive behaviors, and yet others display behaviors that are a combination of the two, so ADHD often looks different in everyone. ADHD can be difficult to diagnose because many of the symptoms of ADHD are often exhibited by children without ADHD. What is consistent with ADHD, is that the concerning behaviors usually begin before the age of twelve and should be observed in more than one setting. As a result of ADHD, academic or work performance and relationships with friends and family are often negatively impacted.

As children with ADHD age, hyperactive symptoms tend to decrease while the symptoms of inattention and poor concentration remain. Untreated ADHD is associated with an increased risk for multiple problems such as bullying and being bullied, depression, poor anger management, low self esteem, poor academic performance, impaired job performance, and substance use. More specifically, it is not uncommon for adolescents with untreated ADHD to attempt to manage symptoms by self-medicating through the abuse of substances, such as marijuana, alcohol, and caffeine.

There Are Three Types Of ADHD:

1. ADHD, Inattentive Type

Common Inattentive Symptoms:

- Failure to attend closely to details or frequently makes careless mistakes
- Difficulty paying attention
- Failure to follow instructions
- Does not seem to listen when being spoken to (e.g. daydreams often)
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities or starts tasks but doesn't finish them
- Loses things easily
- Gets distracted easily
- Difficulty completing tasks that require a lot of mental effort
- Forgets things often

2. ADHD, Hyperactive Type

Common Hyperactive Symptoms:

- Fidgets frequently (e.g. taps foot or hand frequently) or has a difficult time sitting still
- Talks excessively
- Has trouble remaining seated when expected (e.g. in a business meeting)
- Feels restless
- Interrupts others often
- Difficulty participating in activities quietly
- Difficult time waiting for your turn (e.g. standing in line)

3. ADHD, Combined Type: includes a combination of the Inattentive and Hyperactive/Impulsive Types described above.

While medication can be very helpful for many youth diagnosed with ADHD, some providers are reluctant to prescribe medication in older adolescents and adults, because of the high rate of misuse of medications to used to treat ADHD.

Recent research suggests that the rate of Black children diagnosed with ADHD is increasing, however Black children are less often diagnosed with ADHD than White children.^{1,2} Relatedly, there is concern that Black children are often misdiagnosed, and the increase in diagnoses among Black children are due to a lack of cultural understanding from educators and treatment providers. Further, inattentive symptoms of ADHD tend to go undiagnosed in all children, making it more likely that if inattentive ADHD type is present, they are more likely to be undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. These issues make it critical for an evaluation for ADHD to be completed by a culturally competent provider who utilizes a comprehensive approach to the evaluation.

“Don’t allow your problems to define you. Every challenge provides an opportunity for growth”

~ Dr. Dana Cunningham

WHAT CAN YOU AND YOUR CHILD DO?

- Use your phone to set reminders or create checklists of things that need to be accomplished.
- Use phone apps developed for people with ADHD. Some helpful apps are Forest-Stay Focused, Routinist (helps to stay on schedule and create to-do lists), ADD Magazine (toolkit).
- Try to structure the environment to assist your child with things that he/she routinely forgets to do. For example, if your child frequently misplaces their homework, create a homework bin that all completed homework gets placed in after it is completed.
- Set a small goal for your child and provide a small incentive if they are able to accomplish it. For example, if they remember to turn in their homework for three days during the week, provide them with a small yet meaningful reward, like having a movie night on the weekend.
- If sitting still is a challenge at school or work, if possible, consider investing in a stability ball instead of sitting in a standard chair.
- If your child seems to have an excessive amount of energy, try to increase their amount of physical activity by playing a sport or going to the gym.
- Find an effective way to communicate daily with your child’s teacher so you can remain aware of their behavior and academic progress at school.
- Try mindfulness and yoga, which have been shown to be helpful in building attentive skills and decreasing impulsivity.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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RESOURCES

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD) provides information and support for adults and children with ADHD, including support groups and online support. Go to <http://www.help4adhd.org/> or call 1-800-233-4050

Additude Mag

<https://additude.mag.com> has a wealth of resources for families impacted by ADHD including information about symptoms and effective treatment options.

Help Guide

Some tips to help adults manage ADHD are available at <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/add-adhd/managing-adult-adhd-attention-deficit-disorder.htm>

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