

ADHD—What are Common Questions about Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms?

Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Q: Will my child outgrow ADHD? What about a cure?

A: ADHD continues into adulthood in most cases. However, by developing their strengths, structuring their environments, and using medication when needed, adults with ADHD can lead very productive lives. In some careers, having a high-energy behavioral pattern can be an asset. There is no cure for ADHD at this time, but some children learn to compensate enough that they can manage without any medication. Research is ongoing to learn more about the role of the brain in people with ADHD, long-term outcomes for people with ADHD, and the best ways to treat the disorder.

Q: Why do so many children have ADHD?

A: The number of children getting treatment of ADHD has risen. It is not clear whether more children have ADHD or more children with ADHD are now receiving a diagnosis of ADHD and treatment. Also, more children with ADHD are getting treatment for a longer period. ADHD is one of the most common and most studied behavioral conditions of childhood. Because of more awareness and better ways to diagnose and treat ADHD, more children are being helped.

Q: Are schools putting children onto ADHD medication?

A: Teachers are often the first to notice signs of possible ADHD. However, only physicians with parental consent can prescribe medications to treat ADHD. The diagnosis of ADHD should follow a careful process.

Q: Can children get high on stimulant medications?

A: When taken as directed by a doctor, there is no evidence that children are getting high on stimulant drugs such as methylphenidate and amphetamine. At therapeutic doses, these drugs also do not sedate or tranquilize children and do not increase the risk of substance use.

However, stimulants are classified as Schedule II drugs by the US Drug Enforcement Administration because there is potential for misuse of this class of medication. If your child is taking medication, it is always best to supervise use of the medication closely. Atomoxetine, guanfacine, and clonidine are not Schedule II drugs because they don't have potential for misuse.

Q: Will use of stimulant medications lead to illegal drug or alcohol use?

A: People with ADHD are naturally impulsive and tend to take risks. But patients with ADHD who are taking stimulants are not at a greater risk of using other drugs and may actually be at a lower risk. Children

and teens who have ADHD combined with coexisting conditions may be at higher risk for drug and alcohol use regardless of the medication used.

Q: How can I help my child during the teen years?

The teen years can be a special challenge. Academic and social demands increase. In some cases, symptoms may be better controlled as your child grows older; however, frequently, the demands for performance also increase, so in most cases, ADHD symptoms persist and continue to interfere with your child's ability to function adequately. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about 80% of those who required medication for ADHD as children still need it during the teen years. Parents play an important role in helping their teens become independent. Encourage your teen to help himself with strategies such as

- Using a daily planner for assignments and appointments
- Being safety conscious, such as always wearing seat belts and using protective gear for sports
- Getting enough sleep
- Keeping a routine
- Making lists
- Organizing storage for items such as school supplies, clothes, electronic devices, and sports equipment
- Setting aside a quiet time and place to do homework
- Talking about problems with someone he trusts
- Understanding his increased risk of using substances such as tobacco and alcohol
- Activities such as sports, drama, and debate teams can be good places to channel energy and develop friendships. Find what your teen does well and support his efforts to "go for it."

Milestones such as learning to drive and dating offer new freedom and risks. Parents must stay involved and set limits for safety. Your teen's ADHD increases his risk of incurring traffic violations and car crashes.

It remains important for parents of teens to keep in touch with teachers and make sure that their teen's schoolwork is going well.

Talk with your teen's doctor if your teen shows signs of severe problems such as depression, drug use, or gang-related activities.

Visit HealthyChildren.org for more information.

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Adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics patient education booklet, *Understanding ADHD: Information for Parents About Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder*. Information applies to all sexes and genders; however, for easier reading, pronouns such as she are used in this publication. The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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