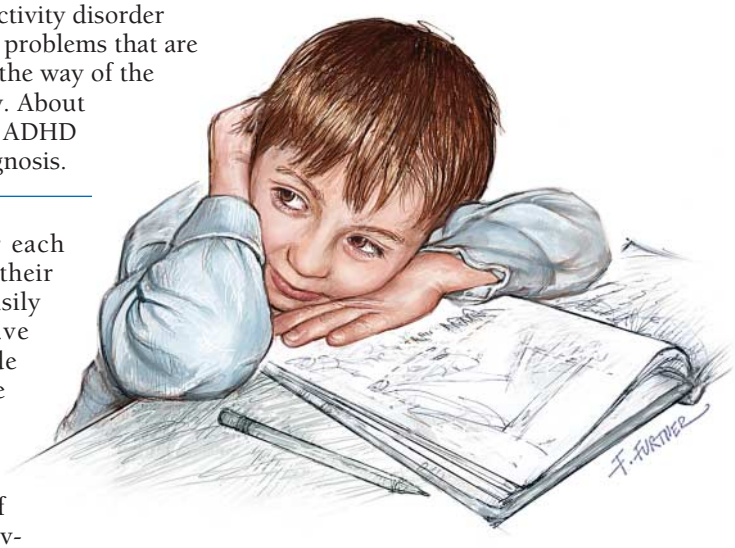
Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have attention and behavior problems that are frequent and severe enough to get in the way of the children's ability to function each day. About 5% of children have ADHD, and another 5% have ADHD symptoms that do not fit all of the criteria for diagnosis.



WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF ADHD?

The symptoms of ADHD may be different for each child. Children may have difficulty controlling their behavior, have difficulty paying attention, be easily distracted, refuse to obey adults, or even have depression. Some examples of behaviors include constantly interrupting when other people are talking, knocking silverware off the table during a meal, not finishing chores, or ignoring teachers during class. Almost all children have times when their attention or behavior may seem out of control, but children with ADHD have these behaviors so often that they get in the way of the child's daily life.

I THINK MY CHILD MAY HAVE ADHD, WHAT DO I DO?

If you are worried that your child may have ADHD, a first step is to talk with his or her teacher or school counselor. In many cases, it is the teacher who first notices signs of ADHD. If you and your child's teacher both are worried about the possibility of ADHD, the next step is to make an appointment with your pediatrician.

There are no blood tests or x-rays that can tell if your child has ADHD. The diagnosis is made by collecting information from teachers, parents, and a pediatrician. This process can take some time. In some cases, other health care providers such as psychologists or specialists may help with the diagnosis.

TREATMENT FOR ADHD

Behavior therapy is a set of tools that parents can learn to better manage a child's ADHD behaviors at home. Many children with ADHD are treated with stimulant medications such as methylphenidate hydrochloride and amphetamine sulfate. These drugs can increase attention and make a difference in the child's ability to function.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT ADHD

ADHD CAN BE CURED WITH MEDICATION. Medications are very useful in treating ADHD, but they do not cure ADHD. In most cases, ADHD continues into adulthood. However, many children with ADHD can develop coping skills to lead very normal and productive lives.

EVERYBODY SHOULD BE SCREENED FOR ADHD. An article in this month's *Archives* investigated school-based screening for ADHD and found no additional benefit from screening all children in schools.

ADHD IS THE PARENT'S FAULT. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder is not caused by parenting. However, the good news is that some parenting techniques can help children with ADHD manage their behavior.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Academy of Pediatrics

http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/default.aspx

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