

ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) FACT SHEET

- ADHD is an illness characterized by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.
- ADHD is the most commonly diagnosed behavior disorder in children.
- ADHD affects an estimated 3-5% of school-age children.
- ADHD affects all areas of a child’s life – home, work, school, and social life.

Clinical Symptoms

SYMPTOM	WHAT DOES A PARENT/CAREGIVER SEE?
Inattentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears not to be listening • Needs instructions repeated • Obeying rules and following instructions are difficult • Disorganized • Doesn’t finish what is started • Easily distracted by external surroundings • Often seems to be daydreaming • Careless • Forgetful
Impulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts before thinking • Constantly pestering • Cannot keep hands to self • Often clumsy and accident prone • Interrupts or intrudes on others conversations and activities • Talks too much, too often or too loud • Difficulty waiting for their turn
Hyperactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems irritable • Impatient • Unable to tolerate delay or frustration • Fidgety, squirms, taps feet, and/or shakes legs • Makes noises or distracts others • Always on the go

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practices are treatments that have been shown through clinical research to produce positive outcomes for children and their families.

Treatment Approaches

The following are the best-supported treatment approaches for treating ADHD in children and adolescents:

- Parent Management Training
- Biofeedback
- Contingency Management
- Self-Verbalization
- Working Memory Training

Treatment Practices

The following are the best-supported treatment practices for treating ADHD in children and adolescents:

- **Praise:** This strategy teaches parents how to effectively use words to reward behaviors. Many times caregivers forget to let their children know when they are on track. Remembering to praise children when they behave well can improve their behavior. Praising them for specific actions (rather than things they can't control) can build their self-esteem.
- **Tangible Rewards:** Tangible means using actual objects or activities as rewards for children when they behave as requested. This can include gum, stickers, computer time, or small toys. (Intangible rewards are not objects and include things like praising or hugging the child.) Tangible rewards can be helpful in promoting desired behaviors, particularly those that are more challenging for children to perform. Tangible rewards are often used at the same time as praise so that gradually the reward can be faded out and the praise is enough to continue the positive behavior.
- **Psychoeducation:** Psychoeducation is teaching children and their caretakers about their mental illness. The purpose is to help children and their families understand how the illness affects them, what kind of activities or treatment might help, and that there are others who have similar problems. This type of education helps them understand what will happen in the treatment sessions and how long the treatment might take. They will also learn what role the parent, the therapist, and the child will play in the treatment, and that they will be a team that will work on problems together.
- **Commands:** This is a strategy that is used to help parents learn to give clear and consistent instructions to their children. Changing caregiver actions can often help to improve a child's behavior. Parents have expectations of their children. However, some ways of keeping children on track are better than others. Commands are how parents tell children what to do. Parents can learn how to do this in a way that makes it more likely the child will do what is asked. They often change how they respond to the child when he or she chooses to obey or disobey.
- **Time Out:** Sometimes children need a break to calm down. Time out is a strategy that removes the child from all activities and attention. Time out works best if it is relatively brief and the child has clear

directions about what is expected. It is also helpful if the child can learn to use this strategy to self-monitor behavior (i.e., learn to remove oneself as a way to calm down).

- **Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior:** This strategy teaches the caregiver how to remove attention and rewards from minor disruptive behaviors (actively ignoring them) and to provide increased attention and rewards for appropriate behaviors (reinforcing them). Over time, the caregiver is able to control the environment in a way that makes it more likely that the child will behave more appropriately.
- **Modeling:** When learning a new skill, it is often helpful to see another person using the skill first. This strategy involves demonstration to the child of a desired behavior, typically performed by a therapist, peers, or other actors, to encourage the child to copy the behavior and perform that behavior in the future.