

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES



What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) occurs in 8% to 10% of school-age children. Primary characteristics include challenges with staying focused and paying attention, controlling behavior, and managing activity level. ADHD is about 3 times more common in boys than in girls and occurs across all racial, ethnic, and social groups.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a child with ADHD might:

- have a hard time paying attention
- daydream a lot
- not seem to listen
- be easily distracted from schoolwork or play
- forget things
- be in constant motion or unable to stay seated
- squirm or fidget
- talk too much
- not be able to play quietly
- act and speak without thinking
- have trouble taking turns
- interrupt others

What causes ADHD?

Currently, the cause of ADHD is unknown. However, there is strong evidence for both genetic and environmental factors. Scientists continue to explore promising areas related to brain function and activity. Research has shown increased risk of ADHD related to smoking during pregnancy, low birth weight, and prematurity.

What should I do if I think my child might have ADHD?

A diagnosis of ADHD should come from a licensed professional, such as a pediatrician, child psychologist, or pediatric neurologist. There is no single test for ADHD. A diagnosis will come after a medical exam, ruling out other issues, and often after collecting first-hand observations from parents, teachers, and others.

Can ADHD be treated?

While there is no cure for ADHD, there are effective strategies that may be put in place to manage symptoms. Research conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs has recognized the effectiveness of four core interventions:

- Child, parent, and teacher education about ADHD
- Medication
- Behavioral therapy
- Other environmental supports, including an appropriate school program

There are many strategies available and there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Discuss individualized options with your child's pediatrician and reevaluate treatment plans and make changes when needed.

How will having a child with ADHD affect my family?

Most children with ADHD will not outgrow it and therefore will need to manage their symptoms even as adults. Children with ADHD are often blamed for their behavior, when it may be beyond their control. Remember this and place patience, compassion, and self-care in your parenting toolbox. Responding in positive and supportive ways will help your child to reach his or her full potential.

Your child may be eligible for special education services and may benefit from additional educational supports. Remember that you will be your child's most important advocate, so familiarize yourself with legal and educational rights.



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RESOURCES

Who We Are and Who We Serve

The **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC)** works with and for people with disabilities and their family members, educators and service providers, researchers, students, and policy makers. Faculty and staff engage in interdisciplinary research, training, service, and information dissemination and work in collaboration with local, state and national networks and partners. (615) 322-8240, toll-free (866) 936-8852, vkc.vumc.org

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Provides free information, referral sources, and help with navigating services via phone, email, and website. Assistance is available to individuals of all ages, all types of disabilities, and all languages spoken. Its website database has more than 3,000 agencies searchable by Tennessee county and service. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC and is partially funded by Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and other state agencies. (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636, TNPathfinder.org

VKC Learning Assessment Clinic

Provides academic assessments for students ages 5-25 who have learning challenges. Contact LAC@vumc.org.

Take Part in Research

StudyFinder is a searchable database that lists current VKC studies. Studies seek people of all ages with and without developmental disabilities. See vkc.vumc.org/studyinder. Research Match is a secure place for volunteers and researchers to connect. See researchmatch.org

Local and National Resources

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/
- **Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)**
A non-profit organization that serves individuals with ADHD and their families. CHADD has over 16,000 members in 200 local chapters throughout the U.S. Chapters offer support for individuals, parents, teachers, professionals, and others. www.chadd.org
- **Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt Health and Wellness Library**
Search "ADHD"
www.childrenshospital.vanderbilt.org/library
- **National Institute of Mental Health**
www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml
- **Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP)** Provides free information, advocacy training, and support services to parents of children who are eligible to receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and who reside in Tennessee. tnstep.info
- **Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education** The purpose is to "promote educational services and programs for all Tennessee's children with special education needs that will enable them to lead productive and independent lives." tn.gov/education/student-support/special-education.html
- **Vanderbilt Center for Child Development**
Search "Center for Child Development"
www.childrenshospital.vanderbilt.org

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