# Common ADHD Symptoms in Children and the Diagnosis Process

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## An Overview of Childhood ADHD and Symptoms of ADHD in Children

Children often fidget, daydream, lose track of time and their belongings. They want to play when they should be settling down. Their energy seems endless and we, as parents, wish we had just a bit. How do we know when a child's behaviors are within normal parameters and when there is cause for concern?

### Could It Be ADHD?

While all the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are normal behaviors by themselves, when these symptoms are ever-present, disrupt a child's development or relationships, and aren't always age-appropriate, they could point to a larger issue than a kid merely being a kid.

If you think there is more to your child's behavior than meets the eye, don't hesitate to look for answers.

### Common Symptoms of ADHD in Children

There are specific guidelines in place to help health care providers diagnose ADHD. Symptoms of ADHD in children must occur across multiple settings, such as at school and at home. If your child has ADHD, they will not be able to control symptoms in one place over another.

These behaviors must be ongoing and affect the success and the maturity of the child.

Common symptoms of ADHD in children to be aware of include:

- **Interrupting:** child is not able to control butting into conversations or activities.
- **Difficulty regulating emotions:** children with ADHD can be hyper-sensitive, feeling everything deeply, with a mind that is unable to regulate these emotions properly. Their feelings can feel "bigger" with emotional outbursts being the norm.
- **Self-focused behavior:** a child with ADHD may have a hard time recognizing the needs and desires of others. This can put them at a disadvantage in peer groups, but can also cause problems at home. They can appear selfish and bossy with no regard for others.
- **Trouble waiting for turns:** who likes to wait? For a child with ADHD, this becomes an endurance test.
- **Squirming, running or fidgeting when inappropriate:** children with ADHD often cannot sit still when they need to.
- **Difficulty engaging in quiet play:** either lost in their own world and making tons of noise disturbing others without realizing, or the inability to entertain themselves because of the need for constant stimulation; quiet play can be very difficult.
- **Problems finishing tasks:** there are multiple reasons things never get finished, but a child with ADHD often leaves a trail of unfinished tasks.
- **Inability to focus, even when being spoken directly to:** child will appear to not be paying attention, or

even ignoring the speaker, as they have an inability to turn their focus from one thing to another or to disengage from distractions.

- **Avoiding tasks that need extended mental effort:** children with ADHD will commonly turn away from things they know will require prolonged attention and effort. I still remember the day one of my daughter's teachers called me to tell me that after a few minutes of math class my child would tune out and begin cutting paper into tiny pieces.
- **Careless mistakes:** having trouble following instructions that require planning and making careless mistakes is common among children with ADHD. It should be noted that as a symptom, this means the behavior is not from laziness or a lack of intelligence.
- **Daydreaming:** I was the prime example of the quiet daydreamer that got overlooked. Zoning out can be a problem for many with ADHD.
- **Trouble with organization:** inability to keep anything organized is a definite hurdle for those with ADHD. My child's desk at school always looked like a bomb had hit.
- **Forgetfulness:** this can be a challenging symptom of ADHD; forgetfulness in daily activities and losing things necessary to carry out daily life is common.

**What Do These Symptoms Mean?**

Children with ADHD who can't focus or control their behavior may struggle with school, get into trouble and have a hard time getting along with others. Discover some tips for helping your child thrive in school with ADHD.

The inability to make and keep friends, the constant barrage of negative attention as they try to do what is expected of them and fall short, and the punishments for these behaviors can lead to low self-esteem, a disinterest in school and friction in the home.

A correct diagnosis and proper treatment can make a world of difference.

**Seeking Diagnosis**

Treatment for ADHD ranges from behavioral interventions to prescription medications. There are many ways families opt to treat their child, but before treatment can begin a proper diagnosis must be made.

The first step of diagnosis is talking to your healthcare provider. A diagnosis can be made by a primary doctor, such as a pediatrician, but some feel that if possible, it's best to be diagnosed by a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist.

In order to make a diagnosis of ADHD, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends healthcare providers ask parents, teachers and other caregivers about the child's behavior across different settings.

This often looks like several sets of forms that will be sent home as well as to several teachers (if possible) and any other adult that is in charge of caring for your child. The forms are a series of checklists that rate certain behaviors on a scale from exhibiting the behavior rarely to often.

Diagnosis depends on the detailed histories, as well as physical, neurological and psychological testing. Results are evaluated from these different sources to rule out other conditions as well as test intelligence and skill sets of the child.

The process of diagnosis can be lengthy, but that ensures a proper diagnosis. Other conditions mimic symptoms of ADHD, so careful diagnosis is essential.
Once diagnosed, you will discuss treatment options with your provider to work out a plan that is best for your child and family. The most important component of any treatment plan is education.

Knowing how your child's mind works and being willing to work with them to find tools that will help them will lead to success.