

Understanding ADHD in Kids

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how the brain regulates attention, impulse control, and activity levels. To diagnose ADHD, symptoms must be present before the age of 12.



Symptom Presentation*

Inattention

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Makes careless mistakes | ☐ Has difficulty following multi-step directions |
| ☐ Lacks attention to detail | ☐ Not listening when spoken to directly |
| ☐ Has difficulty sustaining attention | ☐ Avoids or dislikes effortful tasks |
| ☐ Has difficulty organizing tasks | ☐ Loses things necessary for task completion |
| ☐ Easily distracted | ☐ Forgetful in daily activities |

Hyperactivity/Impulsivity

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Fidgets/squirms in seat | ☐ Gets up when remaining seated is expected |
| ☐ Has difficulty playing quietly | ☐ Runs or climbs when not appropriate |
| ☐ Talks excessively | ☐ On the go or acts as if “driven by a motor” |
| ☐ Blurts out answers | ☐ Has difficulty waiting their turn |
| ☐ Interrupts others | |

***Symptom presentations can look different across kids, and not all of these symptoms need to be present for a child to have ADHD**



Home

Behavioral parenting interventions are the gold standard treatment for children with ADHD to help caregivers reinforce adaptive behaviors through appropriate rewards and consequences, and set up a structured home environment. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or coaching for Organization and Time Management Skills for kids 12+.



School

Consult with your child's school about implementing a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to provide accommodations to prevent ADHD from interrupting their learning.



Medication

Psychostimulant medications are the standard for ADHD. Consult with your child's pediatrician about a medication trial, including which medication (and dosage) might be best for your child.

FAQs

Your child might have ADHD, what's the first step?

Contact your pediatrician to ask for an ADHD screening. To diagnose, they send Vanderbilt ADHD rating forms to caregivers and to the child's teacher(s) to understand the frequency of symptoms and in which settings. Alternatively, they may refer you to see a psychologist or psychiatrist for a more comprehensive evaluation.

Should a child with ADHD be in therapy?

Unless there are other co-occurring concerns like anxiety or trauma, there is no evidence that children **under 11** with ADHD show reduction in symptoms from individual therapy (i.e., play therapy, sand tray, talk therapy; Albalawi et al., 2026). Instead, they will benefit most from parent-focused behavioral interventions.

Is a psychiatrist needed to prescribe medication?

Your child's pediatrician is a great place to start this conversation. You can discuss with them what trialing ADHD medication may look like for your child. Going straight to a psychiatrist may not be necessary depending on your child's psychological concerns.

How can you tell if the ADHD medication is working?

Unlike medication for depression and anxiety, ADHD meds don't need time to build up. The effect is present from the time the pill is taken until the dosage runs out (which varies by medication). Talk to a prescriber to determine an appropriate length for a medication trial.

We Are Here For You

Clinicians at The Perfect Therapy Group are expertly trained in **parent coaching, executive functioning coaching, and organization & time management skills** to support families struggling with ADHD.

Give Us a Call
202-952-7105