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## ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

## CHILDREN WHO CAN'T PAY ATTENTION

## A CHILD WITH ADHD IS NOT A BAD CHILD

Parents are worried when they receive a note from school saying that their child "won't listen to the teacher" or "causes trouble in class." One possible reason for this kind of behavior is a medical condition called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Even though children with ADHD want to be good students, they often have a hard time controlling their behavior and have difficulty paying attention in class. These impulses can frequently interfere and cause problems. Teachers, parents and friends know that the child is "misbehaving" or "different", but they may not be able to tell exactly what is wrong.



Any child may have problems paying attention, getting distracted, controlling their actions and being overactive. The child with ADHD shows these symptoms and behaviors more frequently and intensely than other children of the same age or developmental level. ADHD occurs in 3-5% of school age children. It usually begins before the age of seven, and can sometimes continue into adulthood. ADHD, like other medical conditions, can run in families.

A child with ADHD often shows some of the following:

- trouble paying attention
- inattention to details and makes careless mistakes
- easily distracted
- loses school supplies, forgets to turn in homework
- trouble finishing class work and homework
- trouble listening
- trouble following directions
- blurts out answers
- impatience
- fidgets or squirms
- leaves seat, runs about or climbs—always seems "on the go"
- talks too much and has difficulty playing quietly
- interrupts or intrudes on others

Teachers and family do not always know that the behavior a child is displaying is the result of ADHD. A child showing these symptoms needs a complete professional evaluation by a pediatrician, family doctor or a psychiatrist who can properly diagnose the medical condition. A child with ADHD also may have other psychiatric problems such as depression, anxiety or other behavioral problems. Without proper treatment, the child may experience more failure than success, fall behind in schoolwork, and friendships may suffer.

## ADHD IS TREATABLE

When children diagnosed with ADHD receive the appropriate treatment, they can have a productive and successful life. Research shows that a combination of medication and counseling prescribed by a pediatrician, family doctor or a psychiatrist is the most helpful approach for children with ADHD. The right medication can improve a child's attention, focus, goal directed behavior, and organizational skills. Counseling and other treatment approaches can help a child control anger, improve interaction with others, and organize time.

To find out if your child has ADHD, please talk to your pediatrician, family doctor or psychiatrist or call the Texas Department of State Health Services at 1-800-252-8154 for a referral to a local mental health center.

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