

# ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)



## Definition

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common disorders among children, affecting up to five million children (9% of the school-aged population). ADHD does not “disappear” when a child reaches a certain age, but persists throughout adolescence and adulthood. Individuals with ADHD have difficulty with staying focused, paying attention, controlling one’s behavior, and hyperactivity. While there are treatments that may relieve many of the characteristic behaviors associated with the disorder, there is no cure. There are three subtypes of ADHD: 1) Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive; 2) Predominantly inattentive; 3) Combined hyperactive-impulsive and inattentive.

ADHD often occurs simultaneously with other disorders/ conditions. In fact, scientists estimate that coexisting conditions occur in 30 to 60 percent of all individuals with ADHD. The following conditions are frequently found to coexist with ADHD:

- Learning Disorders – 26 percent of individuals with learning disorders also have ADHD.
- Emotional Disorders – 43 percent of individuals with emotional disorders also have ADHD.
- Mood Disorders – Between 15 and 38 percent of individuals with ADHD also have a mood disorder (e.g., depression).
- Behavior Disorders – Approximately 40 to 60 percent of individuals with ADHD also have Oppositional Defiant Disorder.
- Anxiety Disorders – 23 to 30 percent of individuals with ADHD also have an anxiety disorder.

## Characteristics

All children and youth display inattentive, hyperactive, or impulsive behavior at some point in time; however, those with ADHD display these behaviors to a more severe and frequent degree. To be diagnosed with ADHD, individuals must display at least six or more of the following characteristics for six months or more to a much greater degree than their same aged peers:

### Inattention

- Frequently does not give close attention to details and/or makes careless errors
- Has trouble keeping attention on the task at hand
- Appears not to listen when spoken to directly
- Does not follow through on instructions given & fails to finish task
- Has trouble organizing tasks
- Frequently avoids, dislikes, or does not want to do things that take sustained mental effort
- Frequently loses items needed to complete task

### Hyperactivity & Impulsivity

- Fidgets with hands or feet and/or struggles to sit still when expected to
- Gets up from seat when expected to remain in seat
- Excessively moving on things when/where inappropriate
- Has trouble playing and/or engaging in leisure activities quietly
- Always “on the go” or acts as if “driven by a motor”
- Blurts out answers before questions have been finished.
- Has trouble waiting one’s turn
- Interrupts or intrudes on others

**4-H**  
GROWING TOGETHER



# Working with Children/Youth with ADHD

In many cases the best treatment for individuals with ADHD is a combination of medication and environmental and behavioral supports.

## Environmental Supports

- Provide an environment that is organized and free of distractions. This includes keeping any wall displays out of the direct line of the individual's sight.
- Post rules, expectations, and routines in an easy to see area.
- Provide advance notice for change in routine.
- Provide preferential seating (away from windows, doors, high traffic areas) and reduce noise level in room.
- Define workspace and/or boundaries.
- Use signals or timer to alert individual of approaching transitions.
- Help individual set short/long-term goals for project completion.

## Organizational/Planning Supports

- Provide organization rules.
- Be flexible about organizing.
- Provide visual reminders.
- Post tasks and dates in prominent place
- Help individuals prioritize tasks.
- Teach how to estimate task completion.

## Compliance

- Praise compliant behavior.
- Provide immediate feedback.
- Ignore minor misbehaviors.
- Behavioral contracts.

## Additional Resources:

There are numerous websites that provide valuable information related to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

- The National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml>
- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)
- The National Resource Center on ADHD: <http://www.help4adhd.org>

Prepared by:

Linda Inpecoven-Lind, Ph.D.

School of Education

Iowa State University

[lsind@iastate.edu](mailto:lsind@iastate.edu)

## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY Extension and Outreach

Iowa State University Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. Inquiries can be directed to the Director of Equal Opportunity and Compliance, 3280 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-7612.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cathann A. Kress, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.

**4-H**  
GROWING TOGETHER