



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

The term ADHD describes children who are inattentive, impulsive, and frequently also very active at levels higher than expected for their mental and chronological age. Although the disorder is usually diagnosed during childhood, it may continue into adulthood.

What Are The Symptoms?

- hyperactivity and restlessness – the person always seems to be on the move
- compulsive aggression - disruptive at home and in school, disturbs other children, and may behave in potentially dangerous ways
- excitable, impulsive and unpredictable behaviour; frustration may lead to temper tantrums
- difficulty with tolerating failure or frustration – may cry often and easily
- short attention span – difficulty with concentration
- poor muscle and eye-hand co-ordination
- poor sleeping habits
- normal or high IQ - yet experiences difficulties at school.

What Causes ADHD?

It is thought to be mostly hereditary, although it can occur in families with no prior history of the disorder.

What Treatment is Available?

ADHD cannot be 'cured' but interventions can be used to gain some control over problematic behaviour. A multi-pronged approach to treatment is most useful, with a variety of interventions available from parents, schools and professionals.

Medication may be used, particularly Ritalin and dexamphetamine. This type of treatment has provoked controversy because of perceived similarities of this medication to illegal drugs such as amphetamines. It is important to learn about the pros and cons of medication and discuss these with your doctor.

Behaviour management techniques may help parents and teachers to control problematic behaviour; additional one-to-one help in the classroom may also prove useful.

Dietary changes - some parents have found that changing the child's diet improves the symptoms.

What Can I Do to Help Myself/My Child?

- attend support groups to find other parents dealing with similar difficulties
- attend training in parenting skills
- learn how to advocate for your child effectively with school and health professionals
- build your own support network of family members, friends, other families with ADHD and professional services – don't try to cope alone

For Further Information

- Contact your local GP
- Contact your local community mental health centre (see under 'Community Health Centre' in the White Pages). These usually include at least one Child and Adolescent Mental Health Worker.
- Mental Health Information Service 1300 794 991
- Adults with ADHD (NSW) Inc. (02) 9889 5977
- Learning Difficulties Coalition of NSW Inc. (02) 9806 9960 (parent helpline) or www ldc org au
- Hyperactivity Attention Deficit Association of NSW (02) 9411 2186 or www users bigpond com/hyperadd

References

NSW Hyperactivity Attention Deficit Association
<http://www.users.bigpond.com/hyperadd/>

National Institute for Mental Health, Maryland, USA
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhd.cfm>

Medicare rebates and accessing private practitioners

What is the difference between psychiatrists and psychologists?

Psychiatrists are medically trained doctors who specialise in the treatment of mental illness. Like GPs they can prescribe, administer and monitor medication. Psychiatrists do not advertise so it is up to your GP to refer you to someone appropriate.

Psychologists are trained in human behaviour and use a range of therapies to treat patients. They provide services including assessment, psychological testing, and various types of psychotherapy and counselling.

Medicare rebate for psychologists

A Medicare rebate is now available for up to 12 sessions per calendar year with a registered psychologist* with a Medicare Provider Number. To obtain the rebate you must be referred by an appropriate medical practitioner, i.e. a GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician. The practitioner will ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements and develop a management plan for your condition.

The cost and rebate from Medicare can vary depending on the consultation length and fee charged. If the psychologist bulk bills there will be no extra cost.

For further information about the rebate or to locate a psychologist in your area contact the Australian Psychological Society on 1800 333 497 www.psychology.org.au.

* Similar Medicare rebates also exist for mental health accredited social workers and occupational therapists.

Resource Centre

The Mental Health Resource Centre contains material that promotes a better understanding of mental health issues. New books and DVDs are purchased on a regular basis and visitors are welcome to come in and browse.

Much of the material can be borrowed and books can be mailed to those who are unable to come in. You can find the Resource Centre Booklist at our website:

www.mentalhealth.asn.au

For further information contact 1300 794 991.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed. The listed websites provide additional information, but should not be taken as an endorsement or recommendation.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW. This and other fact sheets are available for download from www.mentalhealth.asn.au. The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

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