

Recognising Symptoms of ADHD

For children/youth to be diagnosed with ADHD, they must exhibit impairments in attention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity that are not better explained by another condition. Parents may have observed that the child seems more hyper when compared to his peers. Or perhaps teachers have noted that the child is struggling to pay attention in class.

Answers to the following questions, if affirmative, will indicate the need for evaluation for ADHD and co-occurring conditions.

Does your child repeatedly get off track? Is your child easily distracted?

Is your child often forgetful?

Is your child constantly on the go?

Does your child avoid work that requires mental effort? Does he or she need constant supervision to complete work? Can your child wait his or her turn?

Does your child fidget often?

Is your child very talkative?

Is your child easily distracted or sidetracked?

Does your child often lose things?

Does your child make careless mistakes on assignments?

Children may be asked these questions: Do you get easily distracted?

Are you easily bored?

Can you usually finish what you start? Is it hard to pay attention in class?

Do you find yourself daydreaming or "spacing out"?

Obtaining collateral information from class teacher is important as ADHD symptoms can vary depending on the setting and activity.

It is important to understand how the symptoms interfere with or reduce the quality of social, academic, or occupational functioning. Understanding how the child's life is impacted and to what degree will determine the nature of intervention.

Children may have symptoms of ADHD for a number of reasons. It is important to ensure that the symptoms do not occur exclusively during another psychiatric disorder and are not better explained by a learning disorder or mental disorder.

Mild delays in language, motor, or social development can occur with ADHD as can low frustration tolerance and irritability. Academic impairments are common and some children with ADHD struggle with reading, spelling, and math. Executive functioning skills such as working memory, inhibitory control, attention maintenance, and response inhibition are impaired as well.

A subset of children with ADHD may present with aggressive behaviour. Understanding the triggers for a child's aggressive behavior is important, as aggression may be a maladaptive way to express frustration, get attention, escape a situation, or obtain a desired object.

If you are concerned that your child has any of the symptoms or impairments described above, please see your paediatrician for an assessment.

