

# Helping Children with Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD & ADHD)

## What If I Suspect My Child Has ADD or ADHD?

Neither parents nor teachers can diagnose ADD or ADHD by themselves. If you suspect your child has an attention disorder, have a doctor examine him. This can rule out other physical problems that show similar symptoms.

If you suspect that your child has an attention disorder, talk to your child's school counselor, a child psychologist or psychiatrist, or other medical professionals may be helpful.

## What Do ADD & ADHD 'Look Like' in Children?

Here are just some of the characteristics of children with attention problems:

- Often fidgets with hands or feet
- Squirms in seat
- Can't stay seated
- Has difficulty waiting turns in group situations
- Often blurts out answers to questions before they have been completed
- Doesn't listen well
- Has trouble following instructions—especially complex instructions
- Is easily distracted
- Shifts quickly from one activity to another
- Often talks excessively
- Often interrupts others
- Often loses things
- Engages in activities without thinking of the consequences

## Parents Can Help Children with ADD and ADHD

What can you do if your child is diagnosed with ADD or ADHD? Here are some suggestions...

- Get support. Join a local group of parents with ADD or ADHD children. Take parenting classes on behavioral management.
- Face the facts. Accept the idea that it is hard for your child to concentrate.
- Drop the scolding and the nagging. They won't help your child.
- Encourage physical activity. Many children with ADD or ADHD need outlets for their energy.

- Be encouraging. Children with these disorders need extra support.
- Boost your child's self-esteem. Focus on your child's strengths. Encourage involvement in activities where he can excel.
- Foster responsibility. Establish rewards and consequences for good and poor behavior.
- Follow good behavior with positive consequences as quickly as possible. Reward your child with some one-on-one time with your or a special snack.
- Provide structure. As with all children, ADD and ADHD children need goals and family rules. Routines for things like homework and bedtime can make your child's life easier.
- Discuss changes. Changes in routines are hard for most kids. They are a special challenge for children with ADD and ADHD. If you must change a routine, give your child plenty of warning.
- Minimize distractions. If your child needs to work alone, provide a quiet, uncluttered place for study.
- Written assignments will probably be the most difficult for your child. If possible, see if he/she can use a computer for writing. This will make editing and proofreading much easier.
- Tape a few reminders inside your child's notebook. Examples: "Write down assignments." "Bring all of your books home."