

What is

ADHD

ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder)

mainly affects children and adolescents. It is a condition where a child or young person finds it very hard to concentrate or focus for any length of time and is impulsive and excessively active in most situations. Some children may have a major attention problem without being hyperactive. You will sometimes see the term 'ADD' which simply means 'attention deficit disorder'.

 *Helping a child who has ADHD: Give instructions one at a time. Be specific and make eye contact. You may need to ask the child to repeat what you've said to them.*

What causes ADHD?

The exact cause of ADHD is unknown. Children with ADHD have trouble processing messages from their brain which may work a little differently from other people's. This may happen before birth or during infancy, or it may just be an individual variation. It does not seem to be caused by diet, yeast infections or allergies, though these may be contributing factors to the overall 'picture' of ADHD. There may also be an inherited or genetic component to ADHD.

 *MYTH: Every child who displays common signs of ADHD actually has the condition. FACT: Children who have been abused, neglected or who have had a recent emotional upset may display behaviour which mimics the signs of ADHD.*

What are the signs of ADHD?

Some of the signs include impulsive behaviour; short attention span; inability to sit still; inability to 'wait their turn'; constantly interrupting; being easily upset and finding it hard to make or keep friends. One major indicator that these signs are ADHD (and not some other difficulty) is when the child's behaviour patterns are similar at home and in most other situations. The signs must be longstanding and severe enough to be a major problem to the child and family.

 *Whanau /Family /Friends: Like all children, those with ADHD need love, affection, nurturing, consistent parenting and clear rules.*

 *Parents - Work with the school or other groups that your child is involved with to provide care and understanding.*

Who gets ADHD?

ADHD affects between 3-5 percent of school-aged children. It's more common in boys than girls. While some children seem to grow out of ADHD in adolescence, there is an increasing awareness that it can progress into adulthood.

 *Whanau/Family/Friends: Take care of other relationships - often a child with ADHD demands so much time that brothers and sisters can feel resentful or left out.*

How is ADHD treated?

There is no cure or 'magic pill' for ADHD despite the controversial use of stimulant medicines. It's a complicated condition ideally managed by a mixed treatment programme that may include medication (Ritalin is the most commonly known); behaviour management and social skills training and counselling or therapy for the child and/or family. Diet, or other complementary treatments such as massage, may be useful.

 *SEEK HELP - It's important that children with ADHD get help early in life so they can learn to manage their problems and develop the skills and confidence they need to lead a successful adult life.*

Where can I get more information?

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

for resources, videos, books and further information.

81 New North Road, Eden Terrace, Auckland

Phone: (09) 300 7030, Fax: (09) 300 7020

Email: resource@mentalhealth.org.nz

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.nz

(see 'Information' for a full description of ADHD)

ADHD.org.nz - New Zealand's ADHD online support group

c/o ADDvocate NZ Inc.

PO Box 249 Tauranga

Website: www.adhd.org.nz

ADHD Association

PO Box 51675 Pakuranga Auckland

Phone: (09) 623 5380, Fax: (09) 623 4051, Email: adhd@xtra.co.nz

This is a national ADHD support and information resource group with five Auckland branches, as well as branches in Whangarei, Hamilton, Tauranga, Rotorua, Napier-Hastings, Wanganui, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Waimate and Invercargill.

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