

# Everyday Answers

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22 23

ADHD

*“My daughter can’t seem to pay attention.”*

*“My son never finishes anything he starts.”*

*“My child is so hyper and squirmy.”*

*“Could it be ADHD?”*

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## **Everyday Answers for Everyday Questions**

*A Conversation on ADHD*



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*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still ...Doesn't Listen

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Can't sit still  
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# What is ADHD?

# Chapter 1

## Learning From Parents Like You

Dear Everyday Answers,

The term attention deficit, in my opinion is all wrong! These kids have the attention...it's just on EVERYTHING, all at once!

My husband and I feel so alone trying to raise a child with ADHD. None of our friends or family deal with such issues; they have no idea what it's like to have a kid like this. I can't tell you how many times I've heard, "Johnny would NEVER act like that." Or, "Your child is the only one who's disruptive all the time."

It's hard just telling people our child has ADHD because you don't know how they'll treat him after they know.

ADHD is controlling our lives. Can you give us some advice?

Signed,  
A. Fremont  
Bennington, Vermont



## How do Kids with ADHD Act?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*S*ome Common Examples:

- Asking the teacher to repeat instructions over and over.
  - Playing with five or six different games or toys within the same time period that other children play with a single game or toy.
  - Getting distracted by other conversations when talking to a friend.
  - While taking out the trash, being distracted by the dog, a younger brother, a toy, or something interesting in the trash. (As a result, the trash never makes it to the garbage can.)
  - Moving up, down, and all over a chair while watching TV.
- Butting in when someone else is talking.
  - Running into the street without looking.
  - Jumping from a roof because it “looked fun.”
  - Jumping ahead of others’ turn during a game.
  - Moving around nonstop or being more restless while sleeping (younger children).
  - Not waiting for a turn and not following rules.
  - Knowing the rules of games and social situations, but not being able to follow them when expected.

ADHD is an explanation;  
not an excuse

## What's Everyday Life Like for Kids with ADHD?

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still ...Doesn't Listen

The first thing you can do to help your child is to understand how ADHD symptoms impact a child at home and at school.

**At home**, kids can have problems getting along with family members, especially their brothers and sisters. Major stress in the family may occur because your child:

- Can't seem to complete household chores
- Argues over chores or homework

- Has trouble getting to sleep
- Gets much more attention than siblings (even if it's negative)
- Does thoughtless things that harm siblings or damages their toys
- Talks too much or interrupts other family members
- Has trouble keeping toys neat and organized

# 4

Chapter 1 | What is ADHD?

*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...**Wiggly**

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**A**t school, ADHD symptoms can interfere with your child's schoolwork and make them unpopular with friends and classmates. This can happen if your child:

- Talks too much when others are trying to study or listen to the teacher
- Doesn't pay attention to what the teacher says
- Isn't completing homework on time
- Forgets things: notes to parents, homework assignments, and lunch boxes
- Loses gloves and hats at recess
- Fails to finish in-class projects
- Butts in when other kids answer teacher questions or talk to one another
- Wiggles around, whether seated or standing in line
- Gets teased and excluded from games
- Is easily frustrated and upset if things are hard to do
- Pokes, grabs, or bumps friends while playing
- Seems "bossy" and selfish

## What do You Mean by ADHD? What is it?

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**A**DHD is one of the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in kids; in the U.S., doctors diagnose ADHD in three to five percent of the population. Children with ADHD typically have more problems than other kids their age with paying attention or “sitting still,” or both. Like all kids, they may have no trouble paying attention to things they really like – computer games, sports or TV show.

Doctors have recognized ADHD as a medical disorder for over 50 years. This disorder makes it difficult for kids to behave the same as other children their age.

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Chapter 1 | *What is ADHD?*

*Never finishes anything...*  
*Can't sit still* ... **Doesn't Listen**

Scientists have found a number of physical causes for ADHD, including:

- Inherited traits (genetics)
- A person's personality or temperament
- Factors related to pregnancy and birth
- Differences in brain structure
- Imbalances in chemicals of the brain that help regulate our emotions, behavior, and thoughts

### Treatable not curable

While no treatment today cures ADHD, medications and/or counseling can help manage symptom. Science tells us that stimulant medications improve many ADHD symptoms for about 70 percent of kids. These medications “wake up” parts of the brain so your child can focus better and control their behavior.

*Squirmy..*

Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

## What ADHD is NOT!

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*A*nother way you can help your child is to teach those around you what ADHD is NOT. It is NOT:

**A Phase** – Kids with ADHD may or may not “grow out of it”. About 70 percent have symptoms as adolescents, but being “hyper” tends to decrease. As adults, they may still have trouble paying attention.

**A Disorder that Only affects Boys** – Both boys and girls have ADHD. Boys are diagnosed two to three times more often; girls tend to have less symptoms that cause obvious problem behaviors (distracting others in class, talking constantly, or fighting).

**The Result of Eating Junk Food** – Eating sweets and fast food doesn’t cause ADHD. However, exer-

cise, rest, and well-balanced meals will help manage your child’s symptoms.

**The Result of Poor Discipline** – How you discipline your child has nothing to do with ADHD. However, just like diabetes and other disorders, being actively involved in your child’s treatment can better help them manage their symptoms.

**Associated with Lack of Intelligence** – ADHD has nothing to do with how smart your child is. Children with ADHD are just as smart as their classmates but may need some extra help in school. With this help, your child can likely do well in regular classrooms

## How Many Other Kids Have ADHD?

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*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still ...Doesn't Listen

Two to five percent of school-aged children have ADHD; that's 1,000,000 to 3,000,000 children who suffer from the disorder at any point in time.

Boys may be diagnosed with ADHD up to 10 times more often than girls. This is probably because boys with ADHD tend to have symptoms that cause more problems at school: being aggressive and irritable as well as interrupting others. Girls with ADHD, on the other hand, may have more trouble with paying attention than any other ADHD symptom.



## Can Anyone Cure My Child?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*T*here is no cure for ADHD. We do know that medication can help reduce your child's symptoms and counseling can teach your child ways to better manage ADHD at home and at school.

Kids with ADHD often continue to have problems as adolescents and as adults; however, their symptoms may change. Unlike children, adolescents and adults tend to have less trouble with being "hyper" and more trouble with low self-esteem, succeeding at work, managing relationships, and controlling their anger.

## When Someone Asks, How Do I Explain ADHD?

1. ADHD is a medical condition that has to do with differences in the structure of the brain, how the brain functions, and to some extent, genetics.
2. ADHD is not something a child will “grow out of.”
3. ADHD is not a “catchall” diagnosis for difficult children or an “easy answer” for discipline problems at home.
4. ADHD affects both boys and girls; however, boys may be diagnosed more often because their symptoms result in less socially acceptable behaviors.
5. Diet does not cause ADHD.
6. Children with ADHD may have problems with paying attention or with acting “hyper” and doing things without thinking, OR BOTH.
7. Children who can concentrate on some things but not others can still have ADHD.
8. Children with ADHD are just as smart as other kids; however, they may need extra help succeeding at school.
9. Medications do not cure ADHD; they improve symptoms by “waking up” the part of the brain that helps kids focus and control behaviors.



# How Can We Be Sure It's ADHD?

# 2

Chapter

11

Chapter 2 | *How Can We Be Sure it's ADHD?*

## Learning From Parents Like You

Dear Everyday Answers,

I'm so frustrated with my child being impulsive, unfocused, demanding to the point of rude, and temperamental. I see the effects of her behavior in academics, among friends, and at home.

My daughter is bright and very athletic, but scatterbrained and defensive. She can warm your heart or tell you off in an instant. At home, she's a chatterbox. But when she goes to parties or Girl Scouts, she hides in the back of the room and doesn't talk to anyone.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard "My kid would NEVER do that. My kid is GOOD." Or "I raised 11 kids, you can handle 2." Or "No other kid acts like your kid in class. He's the only one who's disruptive and a distraction." I think she has no friends because she can't sit still and keep her hands to herself.

Do you think she could really have ADHD or will she just outgrow some of these things?

Signed,  
L. Murray  
Iowa City, Iowa



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Chapter 2 | How Can We Be Sure it's ADHD?

## How Would I Know That My Child Might Have ADHD?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*A*lthough ADHD symptoms can occur at all ages, kids experience certain symptoms more often at certain ages based on their development. Learn the ADHD Warning Signs (on the next page) and contact a mental health professional if you're worried about your child's behavior.

## ADHD Warning Signs\*

### Infancy

- ✦ Cried frequently and was difficult to comfort
- ✦ Was more drowsy and less alert than other babies their age
- ✦ Slept poorly due to restlessness
- ✦ Was a “picky eater” or had poor sucking ability
- ✦ Cried so much they couldn’t eat very well

*\*For ADHD, your child must experience these symptoms more often and more severely compared to other kids the same age AND the behavior must create significant problems in at least two areas of life (home, social settings, and school) for at least six months.*

## ADHD Warning Signs\*

### Preschool Age

- ✦ Being always on the go or appearing to be “driven by a motor”
- ✦ Climbing on and getting into things constantly
- ✦ Playing rough, accidentally breaking toys and things around the house
- ✦ Accidentally injuring themselves and others
- ✦ Demanding constant attention from parents
- ✦ Being unwilling to follow instructions (especially with boys)
- ✦ Throwing frequent, severe temper tantrums that last longer than “normal”
- ✦ Having trouble being toilet trained
- ✦ Sleeping less or being restless while asleep
- ✦ Having trouble with learning to talk, walk, and other development tasks
- ✦ (For the family) Struggling to find and keep baby sitters because of the child

*\*For ADHD, your child must experience these symptoms more often and more severely compared to other kids the same age AND the behavior must create significant problems in at least two area of life (home, social settings, and school) for at least six months.*

## Who do I Go See to Find Out for Sure?

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If you suspect that your child might have ADHD, you can contact different types of professionals for help. Although, their approach to diagnosis may vary somewhat, they will especially be looking for evidence that your child does not function the same as other kids the same age.

- **Physicians and psychiatrists** will typically run some tests and prescribe medications; psychiatrists may have you and/or your child fill out some questionnaires.

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still... **Doesn't Listen**

- **Psychologists** will typically use both questionnaires and tests to validate your child's answers to questions. Psychologists do not prescribe medications, but may refer you to your physician to discuss appropriate drug treatment.

Ask your primary care physician to recommend a mental health professional that fits your needs.

## How Will a Doctor Decide if My Child Really has ADHD?

*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around *...Wiggly*

Physicians and psychologists will use the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* to evaluate your child. DSM's specific criteria for diagnosing ADHD lists symptoms of "inattention" or "hyperactivity" or both.

The DSM specifically requires that these symptoms:

- Have lasted for at least six months
- Be more severe than in others the same age
- Occur in two of three areas of a child's life (home, school, social settings)

### Symptoms of Inattention

- Fails to pay attention to details or makes careless mistakes in homework
- Struggles to sustain attention in tasks or activities
- Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Does not follow through; fails to finish homework
- Has a hard time organizing tasks and activities
- Avoids, dislikes, or holds back from things that require concentrating for a long time
- Loses things needed for tasks or activities
- Is easily distracted by noises or events
- Forgets things in daily activities

### Symptoms of Hyperactivity

- Fidgets; moves hands and feet restlessly
- Leaves seat in classroom or wherever staying seated is expected
- Runs about or climbs around when not allowed
- Has difficulty playing or doing activities quietly
- Is often "on the go" or as if "driven by a motor."
- Talks too much.
- Blurts out answers before questions finished
- Has a hard time waiting for a turn
- Interrupts or walks in on others

## What Happens When We Visit the Doctor?

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*I*nitial visits with a doctor will involve you and your child answering questions about symptoms, their impact on the child's ability to function properly at school and at home, the impact of your child's behavior on the rest of the family, and the medical history of the child. Additionally, professionals may use a variety of tools to clarify whether or not the symptoms truly indicate ADHD these tools can include interview questions, observation, input from others, and testing.

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still...**Doesn't Listen**

**Interview Questions** — All mental health care professionals will ask questions about your child's:

- Performance at school
- Relationships at home, especially with siblings
- Relationships with friends and classmates
- Ability to follow directions
- Self-image and moods

*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

They will also want to know about your child's medical history, medical and psychiatric history of others in the family, any problems with pregnancy or birth, or possible vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

**Observation** — Some psychologists may arrange to observe the child at school in order to compare the child's behavior and performance to classmates of the same age.

**Input From Others** — Some doctors may want to get other people who know your child well to comment on behaviors they observe. Grandparents, teachers, babysitters, and neighbors may have important input besides what both parents can offer.

**Testing** — Special tests exist that scientists have found to be very good measures of whether or not a child has ADHD. Clinicians use these "rating scales" with parents, or teachers, or sometimes with adolescents who might have ADHD. Other standard tests can rule out ADHD when someone has only some signs of being easily distracted or impulsive. Ask doctors or clinicians what tests they plan to use and what the results of those tests will tell them about your child.

You need to know if it's really ADHD.

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## Why Does the Doctor Need all These Tests?

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*Y*ou want to make sure that what your child is experiencing is not something besides ADHD or that they are not diagnosed incorrectly. ADHD requires ongoing medication and sometimes habit and lifestyle changes for your entire family. Because many other disorders can cause symptoms similar to ADHD, it is critical to identify and treat those disorders separately. A thorough diagnostic assessment of your child can also:

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still ... **Doesn't Listen**

- Help make them eligible for special services or for getting treatment covered by insurance plans
- Determine which treatments are needed as well as how and when to take medications
- Help pinpoint what behaviors the treatment will target and how you will measure improvement

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Chapter 2 | *How Can We Be Sure it's ADHD?*

## Could This be Something Besides ADHD?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

Other conditions or situations that can cause symptoms similar to ADHD are:

- Anxiety Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Conduct Disorder/Oppositional Defiant Disorder; Antisocial Personality Disorder
- Depression
- Hypomania
- Learning Disabilities
- Normal variations in attention, activity level, or organization
- Possible genetic and medical disorders

Talk to your doctor or other mental health professional about how they will determine whether or not your child could be suffering from any of these other disorders instead of or in addition to ADHD.

## Making Sure it's ADHD

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1. Make sure your doctor gathers information from several sources, such as interviews with parents, teachers, and the child, and standardized testing.
2. Make sure your child's symptoms occur more often and are more intense than the same behavior in kids the same age.
3. Focus on how your child's symptoms interfere with schoolwork, family relationships, friendships, and mood or self-esteem.
4. Ask the doctor about other possible medical or psychiatric disorders that could be causing your child's symptoms instead of ADHD.



# 3

Chapter

## Can Medicine Help?

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Chapter 3 | *Can Medicine Help?*

## Learning From Parents Like You

Dear Everyday Answers,

I've been going crazy with my boy and his meds. He couldn't function in school without them but complained about stomach aches all the time. I don't really understand how these medicines are supposed to work or if he really needs them. I just wanted my son to be a regular kid, not somebody hooked on prescription drugs and sick all the time!

We have recently started on a new medication. He stopped being so lethargic and having so much stomach pain, but does have trouble going to sleep and pretty bad mood swings at night when he was coming down off the med.

Even though things are a little better, I'm still not comfortable with the side effects of this new drug. Should I talk to the doctor about changing his dose or just be satisfied that this may be the best we can hope for?

Signed,  
M. Smith  
Provo, Utah



# 24

Chapter 3 | Can Medicine Help?

## What Causes ADHD?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around *...Wiggly*

*U*nderstanding what causes ADHD and how medications your doctor prescribes “work” will help you and your child better manage the disorder.

Although we do not exactly know what causes ADHD, we do know that it is a medical disorder. The cause probably has to do with one of several factors:

- Imbalances in brain chemicals
- Having other family members with ADHD
- Being exposed to certain harmful things, like lead

## What Does it Mean to Have an Imbalance in Brain Chemicals?

Areas of the brain affected by ADHD have a number of brain chemicals that control thinking, emotions, and behavior. When these chemicals are out of balance, it can be hard to function normally. The drawing below shows which areas of the brain are affected in kids with ADHD.

### Basal Ganglia

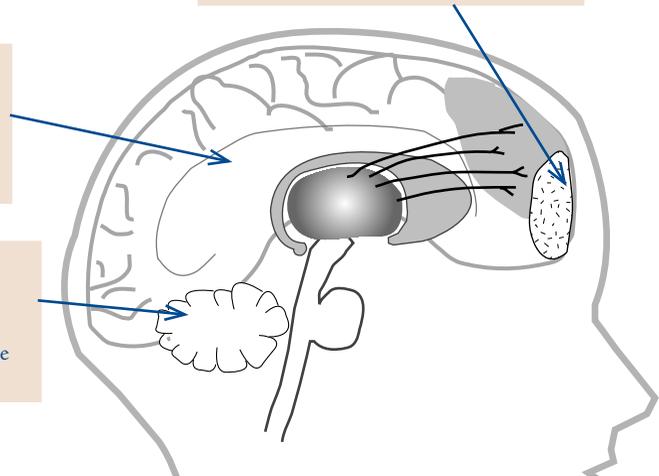
Helps coordinate movements, attention span, and thoughts

### Cerebellum

Helps with muscle coordination, problem solving, and managing time

### Prefrontal Cortex

Controls impulses, attention span, ability to understand new information and social cues



*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still  
...Doesn't Listen

## Is it Genetic? Does it “Run” in My Family?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*G*enetics (or the study of how we inherit physical and personality traits from our parents) also plays a role in whether or not your child could have ADHD. ADHD often affects several members in a family, and children who have one or more parents with ADHD are more at risk of having the disorder.

## Could My Child Get ADHD From Harmful Substances?

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*Bounces off the walls...*  
Doesn't Pay Attention ...*Interrupts*

*R*ids don't have ADHD because they eat excessive sugar or fast food; neither is ADHD related to allergies. However, there may be links between ADHD and:

- + Being exposed to lead
- + Drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, or using drugs during pregnancy

## What is a Stimulant Drug, and How Will it Help My Child?

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**S**timulant medications balance brain chemicals. If your doctor prescribes one of these medications, your child will likely pay attention better, be less distracted, and focus on tasks better. We know from over 30 years of research that stimulant medications are safe and effective for treating ADHD.

Many medications are available for the treatment of ADHD. The most common are stimulant medications, such as: Concerta, Adderall, Metadate, Dextroamphetamine, and Ritalin.

*Never finishes anything...*  
*Can't sit still* ... **Doesn't Listen**

Some ADHD medications take effect immediately and work for five to seven hours, some work for up to 12 hours. You may notice that the effect of the drug may range from stronger to milder and then stronger again.

Some “time-release” medications have a more even effect throughout the day.

Talk to your  
doctor about  
what medications  
will work best  
for your child's  
school and home  
routines.

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Chapter 3 | Can Medicine Help?

## How Will my Doctor Know Which Medication is the Right One?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

Medicine keeps  
your child on  
track.

There is no single medication right for every child with ADHD. Neither is there a specific dose for a child based on their age and weight. Rather, your doctor will prescribe a medication based on your child's symptoms and the time of day your child needs the most help. You can expect that the medication dose will need to be adjusted one or more times to get the best level for your child.

You can help with this process by tracking your child's progress on medication and letting your doctor know what is and is not improving. An easy-to-use tracking system is available at [www.symptomtracking.com](http://www.symptomtracking.com). This system lets you record your child's progress and automatically sends the information to your doctor.

## What Possible Side Effects Could my Child Experience?

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still  
...Doesn't Listen

Some side effects will occur with stimulant medications, usually headache, stomach upset, or sleep difficulties. Talk to your doctor about any specific side effects your child has so the doctor can find the best medication and dose to reduce both ADHD symptoms AND unpleasant side effects.

### Stimulant Drugs and Possible Side Effects

Stimulant	Possible Side Effects
Concerta	Headaches, upper respiratory tract infection, stomach aches, vomiting, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, sore throat, increased cough, sinus problems, dizziness
Adderall	Feeling restless or dizzy, trouble sleeping, dry mouth, headaches, weight loss
Metadate	Being nervous, trouble sleeping, dizziness, headaches
Dextro-amphetamine	Nausea, diarrhea, or loss of appetite; weight loss; trouble sleeping; being restless
Ritalin	Headaches, abdominal pain, nervousness, dizziness, irregular heart beat, or weight loss

## Is There a Non-Stimulant Drug My Child Could Take?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

**O**ne non-stimulant drug, Strattera®, is now available for treating ADHD. This medication affects only one brain chemical, norepinephrine, which can help your child pay attention, not do as many things without thinking, and not be so “hyper.” Side effects of Strattera in children and adolescents may include having less appetite, nausea, vomiting, and feeling tired.

## Does My Child Always Have to Take Medications?

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*Bounces off the walls...*  
Doesn't Pay Attention ...*Interrupts*

**I**f you wear eyeglasses, you know that you may not always have to wear them, but you just don't see as well when you leave them off. ADHD medications are like that.

ADHD, in most cases, affects your child's ability to function. Not taking prescribed medication when and how the doctor advises means that your child won't function as well in school or at home as when they take their medications properly.

## What do I Need to Remember about ADHD Medications?

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1. Take medications every day as prescribed.
2. Talk to the doctor about any unpleasant side effects your child experiences.
3. Track the progress of your child and report this to your doctor. You can use the easy system, [www.symptomtracking.com](http://www.symptomtracking.com), which sends your feedback directly to your physician.
4. Keep medications in a safe place and out of reach of children.
5. Warn older children and teenagers about the dangers of overdose and sharing medications with others.



# Can Counseling Help?

# 4

Chapter

33

Chapter 4 | *Can Counseling Help?*

## Learning From Parents Like You

Dear Everyday Answers,

We've come to terms with the diagnosis and what that means in terms of ongoing medication. But, I feel so alone; it would be nice to have someone else to talk to who was in my shoes. There are so many things that either are so frustrating or heartbreaking about the effects of ADHD. For example, teachers often only see the problems with my child; they don't seem to look past her behavior and see that she's the same sweet kid she's always been.

Then, there's the problems with her making friends. Today at school a little boy in her class said to me "I like Melissa, but she doesn't have any friends, she just doesn't talk to anybody!" What a heartbreaker.

And, what's really tough is just the constant discipline. Sometimes, I really have no backbone, and end up giving in to her whining and tantrums just to have some peace. I could really use some help. What do you suggest?

Signed,  
S. Burton  
Tallahassee, Florida

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Chapter 4 | Can Counseling Help?

## Why Does My Child Need Counseling if Medications Work So Well?

---

*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*M*edications alone can't solve all your child's problems with ADHD. Counseling can help your whole family better deal with your child's ADHD symptoms.

Improving how your child functions at home and at school often means learning new skills for both your child and you. These skills involve ways your child can do better in social situations, overcome negative behavior and thinking, and improve academic skills. Counseling can also help you reduce stress among family members that comes from living with a child with ADHD.

## Will Counseling Help my Child get Along Better with Other Kids?

*Never finishes anything...*  
*Can't sit still* ... **Doesn't Listen**

*R*ids with ADHD are often excluded from play and feel rejected early in life. With less opportunity to play with others, they don't learn to make and keep friends the way other children do.

Counseling can help your child learn to:

- Introduce themselves to someone new
- “Ask” rather than “tell”
- Invite other kids to join a game
- Think about how actions affect others
- Make clear requests
- Find ways to “let off steam,” like exercising
- Resolve conflicts by talking about being angry instead of hitting someone

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Chapter 4 | *Can Counseling Help?*

## My Child is So Negative. Will Counseling Help With That?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*R*ids with ADHD can have trouble with their self esteem that may not improve with successful drug treatment. Counseling can help improve your child's self-image and direct behavior into successful activities.

Everyone needs  
to take a break  
now and then.

Building positive habits or skills can be more effective than trying to get rid of unwanted behaviors. Counseling will help you and your child's teachers to:

- Focus on positively reinforcing good behaviors in public, at home, and at school
- “Catch the child being good” and reward acceptable behavior
- Balance punishment for bad behavior with praise for good behavior
- Select positive behaviors you want to increase and set up a system to do so
- Ignore annoying behavior until it decreases
- Use “time out” techniques effectively

## What Can be Done to Change the Way Kids Act?

*I*n counseling, you'll learn to use a system to manage your child's behavior. Such a system allows you to target certain behaviors, start changing them, and track your progress.

For example, you might decide you want to reduce your child's talking out inappropriately. Using this system, every time your child raised a hand before talking, you would "reinforce" the positive behavior with praise, gold stars, or tokens for earning a special toy.

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still... **Doesn't Listen**

### Tips for Making a Behavior Management System Successful

- Use it to turn positive behaviors into habits.
- Choose rewards you know are important to your child.
- Periodically change rewards to keep your child's motivated.
- Let your child succeed at one or two goals before trying something new.

## What Can I Learn to do to Help My Child?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*H*aving a child with ADHD can make you feel like all you say is, “No!” and “Stop that!” It’s hard to change how we pay attention to our kids, especially when we’re under a lot of stress. You can help your child most by learning new ways to:

- Talk with your child without correcting, directing, or making suggestions
- Look for desirable behaviors rather than being “on the lookout” for problems
- Ignore behavior that is merely annoying, like whining
- Express feelings and requests without creating conflict
- Make simple and clear requests, such as, “In 10 minutes, you will need to go to bed,” instead of, “You need to go to bed soon.”

## Will Counseling Help My Child do Better in School?

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still... **Doesn't Listen**

**B**etween 20 and 80 percent of children with ADHD have trouble with school work. Counseling can give you and your child's teacher techniques for promoting behaviors that make learning easier, such as:

- Having the teacher match examples to your child's interests: action-oriented examples if your child is highly physical or pictures if your child likes art.
- Moving your child near the front of the classroom, where

Counseling can help you find resources for:

- Reading
- Math
- Spelling
- Being organized
- Studying
- Taking notes
- Monitoring one's own behavior and errors

there are less distractions and the teacher can more easily reinforce good work

- Using point systems or tokens to promote good classroom and homework behaviors
- Making "time out" as effective as possible
- Teaching your child to talk through the steps for completing a task, either silently or aloud
- Enlisting another classmate to help your child with reading, math, or spelling

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Chapter 4 | Can Counseling Help?

## Can Counseling Help Lower Stress for My Whole Family?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*W*hen ADHD creates stress for you and your family, it's hard to consistently reinforce your child's good behavior. Reducing your stress might give you more control over your child's behavior. Counseling can:

- Help you and your child get along better
- Give you a safe place to talk about your frustrations with your child's ADHD
- Teach your whole family how to better cope with stress

To do something well, do one thing at a time.

## How do I Fit Counseling to My Child's Needs?

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1. Learn as much as you can about ADHD and how to help your child manage this chronic disorder.
2. Ask for ways to measure how and when your child's behavior improves.
3. Get help with new skills your child will need as they move to the next grade.
4. Make sure counseling programs fit your child's specific schedule and personality needs.
5. Learn techniques for managing how you and the rest of the family relate to your child and his or her behavior.
6. Ask for tips on working with teachers to help your child better succeed at school.



# What Can We Do Now?

Chapter

# 5

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Chapter 5 | *What Can We Do Now?*

## Learning From Parents Like You

Dear Everyday Answers,

Although I have four kids, I can honestly say that I spend most of my time dealing with my son. He cannot finish anything unless someone stands over him constantly reminding him to stay on task.

What's really hard is seeing how lonely he is. He comes home from school and asks me why no one ever invites him to birthday parties or wants to play after school at our house. My son does well one on one, but in a group he's a disaster. He either hides behind my wife or I, or just sits in a chair watching the clock until it's time to leave.

Another problem is how "on edge" everyone is at home. My wife is exhausted from working with my son every night on his homework. And I'm getting a little tired of never getting any time to talk to her anymore. It's a real juggling act to keep our other three from feeling left out as well. What can we do to get some order in this house?

Signed,  
L. Whitcomb  
Abernathy, California

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Chapter 5 | What Can We Do Now?

## How Can I Help My Child get Along Better with Other Kids?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

Children with ADHD often have strong opinions, interrupt others, and can seem “bossy.” To help children learn and practice good friendship habits:

- Teach and model friendly, courteous behaviors.
- Setup short, structured “play dates” with friends.
- Encourage the child to participate in social activities.
- Encourage the child to play structured outdoor sports that he/she enjoys and does well at.
- Limit time spent watching television and playing computer games to promote more interactive play with others.

Improving how your child functions at home and at school often means learning new skills for both your child and you. These skills involve ways your child can do better in social situations, overcome negative behavior and thinking, and improve academic skills. Counseling can also help you reduce stress among family members that comes from living with a child with ADHD.

Don't take good behavior for granted.

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Chapter 5 | *What Can We Do Now?*

## What Can Help Our Family Reduce Stress at Home?

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still...Doesn't Listen

Having a child with ADHD can make for a stressful home life. Team up with other family members to help deal with frustration and focus on being patient and calm with a child with ADHD. Try these “stress-buster” techniques:

- Find ways both you and your child can calm down when you get frustrated and impatient.
- Make and stick to daily routines for the child.
- Use time-out as a break when things are particularly stressful.
- Don't over-schedule the family in too many activities.
- Set up a family system of rules and discipline that is consistently enforced.
- Encourage calm and peaceful activities such as listening to music.

## Tips for Teens:

Teens with ADHD often make impulsive decisions that get in the way of parents granting them the freedom and responsibility their peers may have. Parents can focus on the following strategies to better manage everyday behavior:

- ✦ Review non-negotiable house rules regularly, including associated rewards and penalties.
- ✦ Discuss which rules may be negotiated and under what circumstances.
- ✦ Use positive incentives, such as earning time with friends, for “playing by the rules.”
- ✦ Implement consequences for undesired behaviors as soon as possible.
- ✦ Assist the teen in sound decision making by reviewing and evaluating how to handle different situations.
- ✦ Regularly supervise teens with ADHD by:
  - ✦ Having regular check-ins after school
  - ✦ Limiting the number of friends allowed in the house when an adult is not present
  - ✦ Scheduling times for contact by phone or in person
  - ✦ Imposing a nightly curfew

## How Can I Help My Child Form Good Routines?

*R*ids with ADHD function better when they have a daily routine. As part of that routine, you need to teach your child how important it is to take their medicine according to the schedule set up by doctor. Help children also practice healthy routines for:

- Getting up and ready for school in the morning
- Doing homework and chores around the house
- Getting ready for bed at night

### A Good Morning Routine

Having a consistent morning routine can help your child focus and think better all day long.

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Chapter 5 | *What Can We Do Now?*

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still... **Doesn't Listen**

#### My Morning Routine

- ✓ **Have mom or dad wake me up in plenty of time to get ready.**
- ✓ **Eat meat, eggs, or cheese as part of my breakfast.**
- ✓ **Brush my teeth.**
- ✓ **Get dressed.**
- ✓ **Check with mom and dad to see if I have everything I need for school – lunch, homework, jacket.**

Early to bed makes a great day tomorrow!

## A Good Homework and Chore Routine

**P**lan time to supervise your child's homework and chores. Kids often think that negative feedback from parents, teachers, and friends means they're "bad" or "stupid." Helping your child successfully complete tasks at home can make them feel much better about themselves.

For homework and chores, make sure your child knows what to do and how to do the task one step at a time.

Break up chores and homework assignments into small segments and praise your child for completing each segment. Set up a "chore chart" with rewards for completing assigned tasks on a daily or weekly basis.

To get it done, make it fun!

*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

### My Daily Chore Chart

<u>Chore</u>	<u>Reward</u>
✓ Set the table	✓ Watching TV
✓ Fold the laundry.	✓ Reading with Mom
✓ Sweep the kitchen.	✓ 5 points for a new toy
✓ Make my bed.	✓ Watching TV
✓ Help cook dinner.	✓ 10 points for a new toy
✓ Do the dishes.	✓ Watching TV
✓ Take out the trash.	✓ Reading with Mom

## A Good Bedtime Routine

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**E**ncourage your child to have a bedtime routine that helps them sleep well and wake up rested.

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still... **Doesn't Listen**

### My Bedtime Routine

- ✓ Start getting ready at \_\_\_ PM.
- ✓ Gather backpack, homework, and other things for school by the front door.
- ✓ Pick out clothes for tomorrow.
- ✓ Take a bath/brush teeth.
- ✓ Change into pajamas.
- ✓ Have story time or read a book.
- ✓ Lights out at \_\_\_ PM.

## How Can I Help My Child do Better at School?

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*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...*Wiggly*

*I*n general, helping your child learn how to “take a break” will be one of the best ways to promote clearer thinking and better school performance. Down time, rest, and relaxing with friends and family is vital to successfully managing ADHD. It will be very difficult for your child to remain focused if he or she is tired. In fact, “running on a low battery” frequently makes ADHD symptoms worse. Taking breaks when tired, exercising, and getting adequate sleep are critical for your child’s success.

You can also help your child by working with teachers to reinforce behaviors that will help them do well at school.

## Helping Kids Complete Assignments on Time and Correctly

### *What You Can Do*

- ♦ Urge your child to work with others on group projects.
- ♦ Check the first completed problem on a worksheet.
- ♦ Keep an extra set of textbooks and assignments at home in case the child forgets to bring books home from school.
- ♦ Ask the teacher to report positive behaviors at school each day.

### *How it Helps*

- ♦ Helps the child stay on track
- ♦ Confirms that the child really understands the assignment
- ♦ Avoids schoolwork delays
- ♦ Lets you track and reward positive behaviors regularly

## Helping Kids Stay Focused and Pay Attention in Class

### *What You Can Do*

- Ask teachers to cover difficult subjects in the morning.
- Ask teachers to seat your child near others who do well and don't disrupt the class.

### *How it Helps*

- Makes use of your child's most focused time of day (based on rest and medication)
- Gives your child positive role models and minimizes distractions

Simple steps get  
big jobs done.

## Helping Kids Correctly Follow Instructions

### *What You Can Do*

- ✦ Have your child write down assignments and instructions from the teacher.
- ✦ Have the teacher ask your child to repeat instructions before beginning a task.
- ✦ Let the teacher know ways to get your child's attention when not focused, such as having the child look in the teacher's eyes when instructions are being given.
- ✦ Ask the teacher to use a daily report card to track and reward times the child followed instructions.

### *How it Helps*

- ✦ Helps your child stay focused
- ✦ Ensures that your child listened to and understood instructions
- ✦ Avoids embarrassment when your child's mind wanders
- ✦ Helps motivate your child to listen and follow instructions,

### Tips For Teens:

Contact the school counselor to see if your teen qualifies for a formalized study plan, which might include:

- ✦ Allowing more time to complete assigned work or tests
- ✦ Having a tutor help the student gain master a specific subject
- ✦ Breaking down complex or long-term projects into manageable steps
- ✦ Rewarding appropriate behaviors
- ✦ Providing copies of class notes
- ✦ Arranging oral or taped tests instead of written ones

Suggest; don't criticize.

## Can I get Special Education Support From My Child's School?

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still ... Doesn't Listen

*F*irst, you need to provide the school with a written diagnosis from your doctor. If applicable, it's a good idea to have the doctor write a letter describing the benefits of a special education program.

Public schools must follow the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, which says that for any public school child to receive special education and related services requires an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Know what your child is entitled to for Special Education.

*Squirmy..*  
Always runs around ...**Wiggly**

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Either the school, a teacher or counselor, or you as a parent can refer your child for IEP evaluation. Under the law, parents can challenge decisions about their child's eligibility, evaluation, placement, and the services that the school provides. If this happens, you have the right to pursue a number of options, including perhaps getting an Independent education evaluation (IEE).

**For more information on the IEP process and your rights, visit:**  
**<http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html?e xp=0>**  
**[www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)**

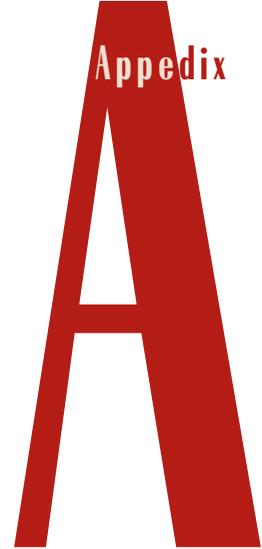
## What Everyday Answers Really Work?

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1. Maintain healthy daily routines.
2. Provide your child with positive feedback at least four times each day.
3. Talk regularly with your child's teacher about ways to help the child succeed at school.
4. Encourage playing with friends and siblings on a regular basis.
5. Make sure your child takes medicine correctly and regularly, as prescribed.
6. Identify what causes stress for your child and you, and try to reduce these problems.



Appendix



# For More Information

Appendix A | For More Information... 59

## For More Information...

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still... **Doesn't Listen**

### *F*or Parents

**Restless Minds, Restless Kids: Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in children and Adolescents (Video)**, by C. Keith Conners, Ph.D. and J.S. March, M.D. Multi-Health Systems, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (1-800-456-3003)

**Parent Training for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents (audio-tape)**, by Wells, K.C. Ph.D., Multi-Health Systems, Toronto, Canada (1-800-456-3003)

Appendix A | *For More Information...*

Check out the A.D.D. Warehouse ([www.addwarehouse.com](http://www.addwarehouse.com)) for a variety of products for ADHD.

For a free catalog of books and other products, call toll free: (800-233-9273).

**A parent's guide: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children, (2002)** by Goldstein, M. and Goldstein, S. (10-page booklet)

**The ADD Hyperactivity Workbook for Parents, Teachers, and Kids, (1999)** by Parker, H.C., Specialty Press

**Straight Talk About Psychiatric Medications for Kids, (1999)** by T.E. Wilens. Guilford Press, New York.

**ADD Quick Tips: Practical Ways to Manage Attention Deficit Disorder Successfully, (1997)** by Crutsinger, C. and Moore, D. Brainworks, Inc., Carrollton, TX (972-416-9410)

**Teenagers with ADD: A Parent's Guide, (1995)** by Dendy, Chris and Zeigler, A., Woodbine House, Bethesda, MD. (800-843-7323)

**Teaching the Tiger, (1995)** by Dornbush, M.P. and Pruitt, S.K.. Hope Press, Duarte, CA

**ADHD: A Survival Guide for Parents and Teachers, (2002)** by R. Lougy, MFT and D.K. Rosenthal, M.D., Hope Press, Duarte, CA

## *F*or Teachers

**A teacher's guide: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children, (2000)** by Goldstein, S. & Goldstein, M.,

**The ADD Hyperactivity Handbook for Schools, (1992)** by Parker, H. C.

**Teaching the ADHD child: A slide program for in-service teacher training** by Parker, H. C. & Gordon, M.

**All about ADHD: The complete practical guide for classroom teachers, (1996)** by Pfiffner, L. J. (1996). Scholastic Professional Books, Jefferson City, MO (800-325-6149)

## *F*or Kids with ADHD

**Jumpin Johnny get back to work! A child's guide to ADHD/Hyperactivity, (1993)**, by Gordon, M., Gsi Publications

**Putting on the Brakes, (1992)** by Quinn, P. O. & Stern, J., Magination Publications

## On the Web...

*Never finishes anything...*  
Can't sit still  
...Doesn't Listen

### *ADHD Web Sites*

#### *For Adults:*

- Outside the Box — [www.adhd.kids.tripod.com](http://www.adhd.kids.tripod.com)
- Kids with ADHD Go Back to School  
[www.aboutourkids.org](http://www.aboutourkids.org)
- Helping Kids with ADHD Succeed in School  
[www.uniquely-adhdhealthology.com](http://www.uniquely-adhdhealthology.com)

#### *For Kids:*

- School & Me with ADD — [www.add.org](http://www.add.org)
- Kids Page with ADHD — [www.hometown.aol.com](http://www.hometown.aol.com)
- [www.brainpop.com](http://www.brainpop.com)