“You’re not paying attention.” “Don’t you know where you put your lunch money?” “Stop fidgeting!” “Don’t interrupt.” Can you imagine what it would be like to hear people talk to you this way every single day? If you can imagine it, or if it sounds just like what you’re used to hearing, then you know what it’s like to have attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or ADHD for short.

Children and teens who have ADHD are not “bad,” “lazy,” or “stupid.” They have a behavior disorder, which means they may have problems paying attention or have trouble sitting still in their seats. They can also act on impulse -- this means doing things without thinking about them first. Children and teens with ADHD may spend a lot of time in the principal’s office. They also might change their friends a lot.

Who Gets ADHD?
On average, 5 out of 100 kids have ADHD. That means that if your school has 500 kids, 25 may have ADHD – that’s like one whole class! Children and teens who have ADHD usually start having problems before they are 7 years old. Sometimes the problems begin when they start going to school. Boys have ADHD more often than girls, but no one knows why.

In fact, no one is sure why anyone has ADHD, although scientists think that it probably has to do with different levels of brain activity. No one gets ADHD on purpose, so it isn't ever anyone's fault. And, ADHD isn't contagious -- you can't catch it from someone like the flu. Someone might have a bigger chance of developing ADHD if one of his relatives already has ADHD.

What is ADHD?
ADHD stands for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. ADHD is a disorder that affects the brain. It causes people to behave differently from others. People with ADHD have problems in 1 or 2 major ways. The first is that they may have trouble focusing on tasks or subjects. The second is that they may act on impulse (without thinking), which can lead to negative consequences. That’s why ADHD gets a bad rap.

Symptoms and Signs of ADHD
The first type of ADHD includes problems with paying attention, staying organized, remembering things, problems completing work at school or home, difficulty following instructions, losing or forgetting things (e.g., homework). This type used to be called attention-deficit disorder, or ADD.

The second type involves hyperactivity and impulsivity and includes fidgeting, feelings of restlessness, difficulty awaiting your turn, and interrupting others.

The third type, which is the most common, involves a combination of the other two types. If you have ADHD, you may not be aware that you are behaving in a way that’s different from others; you’re just doing what comes naturally. But, you might notice that it’s hard for you to pay attention. You might feel bored or frustrated in class. You may have a hard time getting started on assignments and finishing your work. Homework may take you much longer to complete.

ADHD can affect social situations, too. For example, you might react to someone by just saying what’s on your mind -- what comes naturally -- and then you may get the feeling that you’ve shocked or offended the person or don’t understand why people get mad at you. Some of the symptoms of ADHD can be difficult to deal with and can make a teen experience many different emotions. The more you understand about ADHD, the more involved you can be in your own treatment.
What Medicines Are Used to Treat ADHD?

Some medicines used to treat ADHD are called psychostimulants. They can help people with ADHD to better focus their attention on things.

School Tips for Helping Yourself With ADHD

If you have a study hall available to you during one class period or after school, use it and take advantage of a quiet time to study and complete homework.

Take notes during class. This can help to keep you focused on the material being taught.

Use your assignment book to keep lists of things to do. Don’t make lists on scraps of paper -- you may end up losing them or forgetting about them. Get into the habit of completing a list of things to do each evening for what you want to accomplish the next day.

Talk to your teachers about your ADHD and how it affects your work. Ask for their assistance in areas you are experiencing problems. They will be more willing to help if they understand that you are trying to overcome these problems rather than making excuses.

Sit in front of the classroom. This will help you to focus on the lesson and will enable you to pay attention and will minimize distractions.

Be prepared. If you are constantly going to class unprepared, buy a box of pens and keep them in your locker. Buy several small pocket-size notebooks. Each morning, if you find you don’t have a pen and paper, use a small pocket-size notebook, and take a pen from your locker.

If you end up each day at home without the books needed to complete your assignments, use different methods to remember which books to bring home. Ask the school about bringing home an extra set of books. You will not need to carry your books back and forth and will never forget your books at home or school.

Find a partner to help you. Find someone you trust and work well with to help you stay focused during the day. Have a special signal they can give you if they see you have lost your focus.

Clean out your locker every Friday. Get into the habit of bringing home all loose papers in your locker each Friday. When you get home, you can sort through to see what you need and organize the papers. Having a clean locker will help you to stay organized and be prepared.

Believe in yourself and your abilities. You can succeed in what you do.


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