



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Information Booklet



Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

What is ADHD

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects millions of children and often persists into adulthood. Problems associated with ADHD include inattention and hyperactive, impulsive behaviour. Children with ADHD may struggle with low self-esteem, troubled relationships and poor performance in school. Symptoms can be a challenge for parents and children alike. However, treatment can make a big difference, and the majority of children with ADHD grow up to be happy and successful adults.

Symptoms

There are three cardinal symptoms of ADHD. These are Hyperactivity, impulsivity and attention problems. The symptoms need to be present before the age of 7 years of age, persist for more than 6 months, and be pervasive over time. These symptoms must cause impairment in two or more settings including social situations, school or family and are not due to any other disorder. The core inattention, hyperactivity and impulsive symptoms of the disorder can cause significant impairment in the academic performance and social development of the child.

What Causes ADHD?

Scientists are not sure what causes ADHD, although many studies suggest that genes play a large role. Like many other illnesses, ADHD probably results from a combination of factors. In addition to genetics, researchers are looking at possible environmental factors, and are studying how brain injuries, nutrition, and the social environment might contribute to ADHD.

How common is ADHD?

ADHD affects 3-5% of school age children.

There is a 4:1 male to female ratio.



When is professional help needed?

If the child's symptoms of inattention or hyperactivity and impulsiveness are impairing the child's social, academic and family functioning, then help is required. The child should be brought to a G.P. to rule out any medical cause for these symptoms. If necessary, hearing and vision should be checked. The child should then be referred to the local CAMHS for a multidisciplinary team assessment.

Treatment

The first stage of treatment is providing education and support, to child and parents, on ADHD and its management. The aim of treatment is to manage the symptoms of ADHD to enable the child to reach their full potential.

Young people can benefit from extra help in setting up a study timetable. It is also very important that young people are involved in monitoring and making decisions about taking medication.

Parent management training is a fundamental component for all parents. Helping with home-school liaison and developing consistency at home is part of the process. For families where ADHD has resulted in conflictual relationships developing between children and parents, counselling may be helpful.

Medication has been shown to be the most effective intervention for the core symptoms of ADHD. A combined approach of behaviour therapy and medication is the preferred treatment package for children with ADHD and comorbid difficulties. As children develop cognitively they can develop self-monitoring skills to be aware of their difficulties and try to build up their skills to manage their symptoms of ADHD. The medications found effective in ADHD are mostly stimulant medications and their main action is on the Dopamine Pathways in the brain. The most common stimulant medication is METHYLPHENIDATE (Ritalin). It works within 20-30 minutes of being swallowed and lasts approximately 3-4 hours. It is usually prescribed two to three times daily. There are longer acting stimulants Concerta and Ritalin LA which are taken once daily and can last for 8-12 hours. Atomoxetine is also given once a day, lasting 24 hours and is a non-stimulant medication. The common side-effects are reduced appetite and difficulty getting to sleep. Less common side effects are headaches, tummy pains, tics and irritability. The doctor prescribing medication will give the parents and the child information on medication and will monitor it closely.

Look - For the signs and symptoms
Listen - To your friends experiences
Talk - About what's going on
Seek Help

More Support & Information

Books:

- Parenting the ADD child. David Pentecost. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Understanding ADD. A Parents guide to ADD in children. Christopher Green and Kit Chee. Published by Vermilion.
- Understanding your hyperactive child. Eric Taylor. Published by Vermillion.
- Coping successfully with your hyperactive child. Paul Carson. Published by Sheldon Press.

Organisation:

HADD Family Support Group,
Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups,
Carmichael House,
North Brunswick Street,
Dublin 7.
Email: info@hadd.ie
Tel: (01) 8748349

Useful Websites:

www.adders.org
www.addcentre.co.uk
www.addiss.co.uk

St Patrick's Mental Health Services

James' Street, Dublin 8, Ireland.

t: +353 1 249 3200. f: +353 1 679 8865.

Support & Information Line: 01 249 3333

e: info@stpatsmail.com

www.stpatricks.ie