

## What is ADHD?

### **Pre-reading questions:**

- Are ADHD/ADD and learning disabilities/LD the same?
- 'ADD students are very intelligent and incredibly creative'. Do you agree with this?
- How should teachers deal with ADHA/ADD pupils? Do you know any strategies?

Attention disorders, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning disabilities often occur at the same time, but the two disorders are not the same.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurological condition that involves problems with inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity that are developmentally inconsistent with the age of the child. We are now learning that ADHD is not a disorder of attention, as had long been assumed. Rather, it is a function of developmental failure in the brain circuitry that monitors inhibition and self-control. This loss of self-regulation impairs other important brain functions crucial for maintaining attention, including the ability to defer immediate rewards for later gain (Barkley, 1998a).

Behavior of children with ADHD can also include excessive motor activity. The high energy level and subsequent behavior are often misperceived as purposeful noncompliance when, in fact, they may be a manifestation of the disorder and require specific interventions.

Children with ADHD exhibit a range of symptoms and levels of severity. In addition, many children with ADHD often are of at least average intelligence and have a range of personality characteristics and individual strengths.



Children with ADHD typically exhibit behavior that is classified into **two main categories**: **poor sustained attention** and **hyperactivity-impulsiveness**. As a result, **three subtypes** of the disorder have been proposed by the American Psychiatric Association in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*: **predominantly inattentive**, **predominantly hyperactive-impulsive**, and **combined types** (Barkley, 1997). A child expressing hyperactivity commonly will appear fidgety, have difficulty staying seated or playing quietly, and act as if driven by a motor. Children displaying impulsivity often have difficulty participating in tasks that require taking turns. Other common behaviors may include blurting out answers to questions instead of waiting to be called and flitting from one task to another without finishing. The inattention component of ADHD affects the educational experience of these children because ADHD causes them to have difficulty in attending to detail in directions, sustaining attention for the duration of the task, and misplacing needed items. These children often fail to give close attention to details, make careless mistakes, and avoid or dislike tasks requiring sustained mental effort.

Although these behaviors are not in themselves a learning disability, almost one-third of all children with ADHD have learning disabilities (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 1999). Children with ADHD may also experience difficulty in reading, math, and written communication (Anderson, Williams, McGee, & Silva, 1987; Cantwell & Baker, 1991; Dykman, Akerman, & Raney, 1994; Zentall, 1993). Furthermore, ADHD commonly occurs with other conditions. Current literature indicates that approximately 40–60 percent of children with ADHD have at least one coexisting disability (Barkley, 1990a; Jensen, Hinshaw, Kraemer, et al., 2001; Jensen, Martin, & Cantwell, 1997).

Although any disability can coexist with ADHD, certain disabilities seem to be more common than others. These include disruptive behavior disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, tics and Tourettes Syndrome, and learning disabilities (Jensen, et al., 2001). In addition, ADHD affects children differently at different ages. In some cases, children initially identified as having hyperactive-impulsive subtype are subsequently identified as having the combined subtype as their attention problems surface.

These characteristics affect not only the academic lives of students with ADHD, they may affect their social lives as well. Children with ADHD of the predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type may show aggressive behaviors, while children of the predominantly inattentive type may be more withdrawn. Also, because they are less disruptive than children with ADHD who are hyperactive or impulsive, many children who have the inattentive type of ADHD go unrecognized and unassisted. Both types of children with ADHD may be less cooperative with others and less willing to wait their turn or play by the rules (NIMH, 1999; Swanson, 1992; Waslick & Greenhill, 1997). Their inability to control their own behavior may lead to social isolation. Consequently, the children's self-esteem may suffer (Barkley, 1990a). In the United States, an estimated 1.46 to 2.46 million children (3 percent to 5 percent of the student population) have ADHD (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Anderson, et al., 1987; Bird, et al., 1988; Esser, Schmidt, & Woemer, 1990; Pastor & Reuben, 2002; Pelham, Gnagy, Greenslade, & Milich, 1992; Shaffer, et al., 1996; Wolraich, Hannah, Pinock, Baumgaertel, & Brown, 1996). Boys are four to nine times more likely to be diagnosed, and the disorder is found in all cultures, although prevalence figures differ (Ross & Ross, 1982).

Adapted from:

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/8840>

### ***Reading comprehension***

Are these sentences true/T or false/F?

1. AD/HD children can understand details in directions.
2. ADHD is a disorder of attention.
3. Children with AD/HD often act as if driven by a motor.
4. Most children with ADHD have learning disabilities.
5. ADHD children less cooperate with others and they are less willing to play by the rules.
6. ADHD children can change their behaviour at different ages.

### ***Match the words and expressions with their meanings***

to affect, attention, effort, to exhibit, failure, to impair,

- a) watching, listening to or thinking about sb/sth carefully
- b) lack of success
- c) to spoil or weaken something so that it is less effective:
- d) to influence sb or sth
- e) to show sth publicly
- f) sth that takes a lot of energy; energy that you need to do sth

### ***Key***

***T/F*** 1F, 2F, 3T, 4F, 5T, 6T

***Matching*** a)attention b)failure c)impair d)affect e)exhibit f)effort