

ADHD – WHEN EVERYDAY LIFE IS CHAOS

There's nothing unusual in children finding it hard to sit still, concentrate and control their impulses. But for children with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), these difficulties are so severe that they cause problems in everyday life and affect their natural development.¹

For children with ADHD, everyday life can be chaotic. They often lose things, and forget times and homework. Moreover, children with ADHD often find it hard to wait their turn or finish tasks they don't enjoy. They can also easily get into arguments as they get upset and angry more readily than other children, sometimes over the littlest things.

Children who do not receive the right support and treatment run a great risk of performing poorly in school and losing their self-esteem.² They may have difficulty making friends and coping with social situations.



WHAT IS ADHD?

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. ADHD is a well-documented and extensively studied disability that affects between 3% and 5% of children of school age.

The core symptoms of ADHD are:

- Attention deficiency
- Impulsivity
- Hyperactivity

In simple terms, children with ADHD have great difficulty maintaining their attention and controlling their impulses. In families where one of the parents has ADHD, there is a high risk that one of the children will suffer too. Today there is scientific evidence to suggest that ADHD is hereditary to some extent.¹

SYMPTOM: SHORT ATTENTION SPAN

1. Finds it hard to focus attention on a task
2. Often makes careless errors in schoolwork
3. Appears not to be listening when directly spoken to
4. Has difficulty following instructions and often fails in various tasks
5. Finds it hard to organise tasks and activities
6. Is unwilling to perform tasks that require mental endurance
7. Is easily distracted by his or her surroundings
8. Is often forgetful in day-to-day life
9. Often loses things



SYMPTOM: HYPERACTIVITY

1. Often has difficulty keeping hands and feet still, or sitting still
2. Often gets up in class or in other situations where he or she is expected to stay seated for a long time
3. Often runs around, clambers and climbs more than what is considered appropriate for the situation. In adolescents and adults this may be limited to a subjective feeling of restlessness
4. Often finds it hard to play or do leisure activities in a calm, tranquil way
5. Often seems to be 'running about' or 'revved up'
6. Often talks excessively

SYMPTOM: IMPULSIVITY

1. Often blurts out answers to questions before the person has finished asking
2. Often has difficulty waiting his/her turn
3. Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g. barging in on other people's conversations or games)

HOW DOES ADHD AFFECT THE FAMILY?

Living with ADHD is primarily a strain for the child or adolescent themselves. However, being the parent of a child with ADHD can also be hard and demanding.

The problems are particularly noticeable in demand situations. Many children with ADHD react quickly with strong emotions, which may mean they answer with anger and protestation as they find the demands frustrating. Even minor things can lead to outbursts and emotionally charged scenes.

It is important for parents to understand how their child functions, so they don't control their child's behaviour with prohibition, negative comments and threats of punishment.

Without an understanding of how a child with these difficulties can affect their surroundings, there is a risk that the parents are blamed for causing the observed problems.

Being the sibling of a child with ADHD can also be difficult and demanding. Quite often the siblings without ADHD may have less space in the family than they need, which may lead to conflict situations.

WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT?

If you are a concerned parent, you can turn to a paediatrician, a school teacher or a child and youth psychiatry clinic. It is important for the evaluation team to have as much information as possible about the child's functioning at school, with friends and at home. It is therefore a good idea to talk to the school or pre-school to find out how the child functions in that environment.

WHAT DOES THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM DO?

There is no simple test for indicating ADHD. Diagnosis calls for far-reaching evaluation, partly including in-depth interviews with the child's parents and sometimes also with the child him or herself. Information will also be gathered from school or pre-school staff, as it is important to assess how the child functions in different environments. Diagnosis may also involve psychological testing and medical examinations.²

The overall evaluation is a team process mainly involving a doctor, a psychologist and an educationalist.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

While there is currently no way of completely curing ADHD, there are some good solutions available in the form of psychosocial support measures, possibly combined with medication. For children, psychosocial support generally involves a combination of parent education, measures at school, and measures aimed directly at the child in the form of problem-solving and training in social skills. Good treatment results are often achieved through support measures combined with medication.²

The benefits of medication include improved concentration, which makes it easier to absorb knowledge, information and instructions. For many people this makes everyday life feel easier.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR WOULD YOU LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT ADHD?

See also:

www.attention-riks.se

Swedish interest organisation

www.sos.se

Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare has published a knowledge summary entitled ADHD hos barn och vuxna [ADHD in children and adults] (in Swedish only)

www.levamedadhd.se

Information about ADHD from Janssen

References:

1. ADHD hos barn och vuxna/ADHD in children and adults, Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2005
2. www.attention-riks.se

The information in this brochure was compiled in November 2007.

Janssen-Cilag AB Box 7073, SE-192 07 Sollentuna, Sweden
Tel +46 8 626 50 00, jacse@its.jnj.com, www.janssen.se

JC-120087-1