



**ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)
FACT SHEET**

- **ADHD** is an illness characterized by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.
- **ADHD** is the most commonly diagnosed behavior disorder in young persons.
- **ADHD** affects an estimated three to five percent of school-age children.
- **ADHD** affects all areas of a child's life – home, work, school, and social life.

CLINICAL SYMPTOMS	WHAT DOES A PARENT/CAREGIVER SEE?
Inattentiveness	Appears not to be listening; needs instructions repeated; obeying rules and following instructions are difficult; disorganized; doesn't finish what is started; easily distracted by external surroundings; often seems to be daydreaming; careless; forgetful
Impulsivity	Acts before thinking; constantly pestering; cannot keep hands to self; often clumsy and accident prone; interrupts or intrudes on others conversations and games; talks too much; talks too often and loud; difficulty waiting for turn
Hyperactivity	Seems irritable; impatient; unable to tolerate delay or frustration; fidgety; makes noises or distracts others; squirms; taps feet; shakes legs; always on the go
Combined Hyperactive/Impulsive	Significant difficulty in home, social or school settings beginning before age seven; cannot function in two or more settings; symptoms are not due to another illness

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES are treatments that have been shown through clinical research to produce positive outcomes for children and their families.

The most common effective treatment strategies for ADHD are:

- **Praise**
- **Psychoeducation**
- **Tangible Rewards**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Commands**
- **Differential Reinforcement**
- **Time Out**



Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) treatment strategy descriptions:

Praise

This strategy teaches parents how to effectively use words to reward behaviors. Many times caregivers forget to let their children know when they are on track. Remembering to praise children when they behave well can improve their behavior. Praising them for their specific actions (rather than things they can't control) can build their self-esteem.

Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is teaching children and their caretakers about their mental illness. The purpose is to help children and their families understand how the illness affects them, what kind of activities or treatment might help, and that there are others who have similar problems. This type of education helps them understand what will happen in the treatment sessions and how long the treatment might take. They will also learn what role the parent, the therapist, and the child will play in the treatment, and that they will be a team that works on problems together.

Tangible Rewards

Tangible means using actual objects or activities as rewards for children when they behave as requested. This can include gum, stickers, computer time, or small toys. (Intangible rewards are not objects and include things like praising or hugging the child.) Tangible rewards can be helpful in promoting desired behaviors, particularly those that are more challenging for a child to perform. Tangible rewards are often used at the same time as praise so that gradually the reward can be faded out and the praise is enough to continue the positive behavior.

Problem Solving

Children with mental illnesses often think their problems are too big to handle. Problem-solving is a strategy that teaches a child how to clearly identify a problem, look at all possible solutions, and choose a solution. They also learn to evaluate their choices, and, if necessary, come up with different solutions. This strategy teaches children how to use problem-solving in their day-to-day activities.

Commands

This is a strategy that is used to help parents learn to give clear and consistent instructions to their children. Changing caregiver actions can often help to improve a child's behavior. Parents have expectations of their children. However, some ways of keeping children on track are better than others. Commands are how parents tell children what to do. Parents can learn how to do this in a way that makes it more likely the child will do what is asked. They often change how they respond to the child when he or she chooses to obey or disobey.

Differential Reinforcement

This strategy teaches the caregiver to how remove attention and rewards from minor disruptive behaviors (actively ignoring them) and to provide increased attention and rewards for appropriate behaviors (reinforcing them). Over time, the caregiver is able to control the environment in a way that makes it more likely that the child will behave more appropriately.

Time Out

Sometimes children need a break to calm down. Time out is a strategy that removes the child from all activities and attention. Time out works best if it is relatively brief, and the child has clear directions about what is expected. It is also helpful if the child can learn to use this strategy to self-monitor behavior (i.e., learn to remove oneself as a way to calm down).