

ADHD

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

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ADHD is a common disorder that affects approximately one in 10 school-aged children in Utah. Most children have some symptoms in common with ADHD, but children with the disorder have had problems that interfere with school, work, home, sports, and/or peer relationships for a long time. Many parents wonder if their child has ADHD and what they can do to help.

There's no blood test, MRI, or X-ray that helps diagnose ADHD. It is a clinical diagnosis that relies on input from many sources. Most physicians use standard questionnaires filled out by parents, teachers, and/or counselors to begin the workup. These questionnaires typically cover symptoms of ADHD as well as of other disorders that may co-exist, such as sleep disorders, learning disabilities, oppositional defiant disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression. After reviewing the paperwork, the physician will perform a medical history and physical exam.

If your child is diagnosed with ADHD, here are some suggestions for treatment/education:

1. Learn more at helpful websites:
www.intermountainhealthcare.org, www.chaddofutah.com,
www.aap.org.
2. Attend a parenting class: many school districts and CHADD of Utah offer helpful classes.
3. Join a parent support group: CHADD of Utah also runs support groups.
4. Partner with your school/teacher to find out what accommodations can be made for your child and how you may be able to help in the classroom.
5. Have your child use a planner at school to stay organized.
6. Set a routine time and place for homework, and minimize distractions.
7. Consider counseling/behavior therapy, especially if there are co-existing medical conditions.
8. Partner with your physician to discuss medication.

Several medical options are available for the treatment of ADHD. Most physicians will begin with a stimulant medication such as methylphenidate, which has been used successfully for decades. The majority of medications can now be given once per day, so there is no need to have them given to your child at school. Non-stimulant medications such as atomoxetine, guanfacine, or clonidine are used occasionally for some patients.

Some parents are hesitant to medicate their children and fear that they will become "zombies" or "addicts." The truth is that children who are not treated for ADHD are prone to substance abuse, school and work problems, difficulty with personal relationships, and low self-esteem.

If you think your child may be struggling with ADHD, we encourage you to consult with your pediatrician. To find a pediatrician near you, visit the index at the back of this publication or intermountainmedicalgroup.org.