



What Is Hyperactivity?

"You're not paying attention."

"Don't you know where you put your lunch money?"

"Stop fidgeting!"

"Don't interrupt."

Can you imagine what it would be like to hear people talk to you this way every single day? If you can imagine it, or if it sounds just like what you're used to hearing, then you know what it's like to have ADHD. Those letters stand for a condition called attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Kids who have ADHD are not bad, lazy, or stupid. They have a disorder that means they may have problems paying attention or sitting still in their seats. They can also act on impulse - this means doing things without thinking about them first. Kids with ADHD may spend a lot of time in the principal's office. Sometimes they do things that cause them to get hurt. They might change their friends a lot.

Who Gets ADHD?

On average, five out of 100 kids have ADHD. That means that if your school has 500 kids, 25 may have ADHD - that's like one whole class! Kids who have ADHD usually start having problems in preschool. Boys have ADHD more often than girls, but no one knows why.

A kid might have a greater chance of developing ADHD if one of his or her relatives already has ADHD or another type of behavior problem. But no one is sure why anyone has ADHD, although scientists and doctors think that it probably has to do with differences in the way people's brains work. No one gets ADHD on purpose, so it isn't ever anyone's fault. And ADHD isn't contagious - you can't catch it from someone like the flu.

What Are the Signs of ADHD?

ADHD can cause kids to act in different ways, depending on who has it. Most kids with ADHD have problems concentrating and paying attention. Some kids with ADHD might also have trouble sitting still in class and waiting for their turn. They might yell out the answers before other kids have a chance to raise their hands.

Sometimes they can be disorganized, distracted, or forgetful. They might lose things and have trouble finishing assignments. They may wiggle around in their seats, move around a lot, talk too much, or interrupt other people's conversations.

It's important to remember that everybody does these things once in a while. It doesn't mean you have ADHD.

Checking It Out

When parents and teachers suspect that a child has ADHD, the first step is to visit the doctor. He or she may then refer the kid to a specialist like a psychologist, psychiatrist, or neurologist.