

The logo for KidsHealth, featuring the word "KidsHealth" in a white, sans-serif font inside a dark, rounded rectangular banner.

ADHD Medicines

Have you ever been so bored that you didn't know what to do with yourself? Maybe your parents wanted you to sit and watch an old movie where everyone is always breaking into song. Sitting there, you might have felt fidgety and squirmy and wanted to bounce off the walls. Imagine having that feeling a lot. That's what it can feel like to have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD.

Feeling this way a lot of the time can make it difficult for someone to get work done at school or follow instructions given by a parent. A kid who has ADHD might yell out the answers to questions before other kids in class have a chance to raise their hands. They also can be disorganized, distracted, and forgetful. They might lose things and have trouble finishing assignments. They may move around a lot, talk nonstop, or interrupt other people's conversations.

Most kids do some of these things some of the time, but when the kid is acting this way a lot of the time, it's a good idea to talk to a doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, or therapist. One of these people can figure out if the kid has ADHD. With help, a kid with ADHD can learn to act differently. Sometimes medicine can help a kid take control of his or her behavior, but only a doctor can decide if ADHD medicine is needed.

If you have ADHD, you're not alone
- it's estimated that up to 5% of
kids in the United States have been
diagnosed with ADHD.

Medicine and the Mind

Some of the medicines for ADHD are stimulants, but instead of stimulating the person and making him or her more jittery, they help control ADHD symptoms. Other ADHD drugs are not stimulants, but like stimulants, they seem to affect chemicals in the brain called **neurotransmitters** (say: nur-o-tranz-mit-urz). Neurotransmitters help send messages between nerve cells in the brain. Doctors don't know exactly why, but the right dose of an ADHD medicine can