Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Handout

What Is ADHD?

Children with ADHD have problems with controlling their attention, impulses, and activity level. Having ADHD makes it hard for children to stay on task. ADHD is one of the most common chronic conditions of childhood.

What Causes ADHD?

Doctors are often unable to tell what caused a child to have ADHD. A child is more likely to have ADHD if they:

- Were born prematurely
- Were exposed to alcohol before they were born
- Have a close relative with ADHD

What Are the Symptoms of ADHD?

Not all children with ADHD have the same symptoms. Their symptoms fall into three groups: mainly inattentive, mainly hyperactive and impulsive or a combination of both groups.

Mainly Inattentive Children Often:

- Are easily distracted
- Daydream
- Seem to not listen
- Make careless mistakes
- Lose things
- Are disorganized

Mainly Hyperactive and Impulsive Children Often:

- Talk a lot
- Have trouble playing quietly
- Act without thinking
- Constantly move
- Interrupt others
- Have trouble taking turns
- Have a hard time waiting for things
- Fidget a lot

How Can ADHD Affect My Child?

- They often struggle to pay attention and focus long enough to take in information. This makes it hard to finish a task.
- They may not do as well as they could in school and fall behind.
- They may also have mood swings because of problems handling their emotions. Their reactions may seem more intense than those of other children.

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How Can I Help My Child?

Ideal treatment usually includes psychotherapy, parent training and medicine.

Psychotherapy

There are different types of therapy for a child with ADHD. Therapy can address feelings around ADHD. It can also help educate about ADHD. And it can help teach ways to manage the symptoms and make daily tasks easier.

Parent Training

Parent training teaches parents how to deal with common struggles children with ADHD have at home and school. Training is often done by a psychologist, social worker or mental health counselor.

At home:

- Look for good behavior and praise your child right away. Be specific. Note the exact behavior you were pleased with.
- Give your child rules that are clear and brief.
- Keep a consistent morning and evening routine. Have a regular time for meals, homework, going to bed and TV.
- Make sure your child understands the rules and consequences for breaking rules. Be consistent.
- Give only one direction at a time. Give directions as statements, not questions or requests.

At school:
Talk with your child's school about a 504 plan based on their diagnosis. Some things your child may need in the plan:

Students should be allowed to:

- Sit in the front of the classroom.
- Move around and take extra breaks during the school day.
- Take tests in a quiet area.

Teachers should:

- Keep assignments brief or break them into smaller chunks.
- Vary the format and presentation of material to help keep interest.
- Minimize distractions in the classroom.

Medicine

It may take time to find the right medicine and dose for your child. You can work with your child's pediatrician or child psychiatrist to figure out which medicine is best for your child.

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