

Could My Child Have ADHD?

A Parent's Guide to Recognizing the Signs in Children Ages 6 to 8

If you have found your way to this resource, something about your child's behavior or school experience has caught your attention. That instinct is worth taking seriously. ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions in childhood, affecting approximately 8 to 11 percent of school-age children in the United States. Yet many children, particularly girls and children of color, go undiagnosed for years because their symptoms look different from the familiar picture of a hyperactive child who cannot sit still. This guide will help you understand what to look for, what it may mean, and what to do next. Only a qualified healthcare provider can diagnose ADHD. This resource is not a diagnostic tool. It is a starting point for an important conversation.

An Important Note Before You Read On. Many of the behaviors described below are completely normal in young children some of the time. What distinguishes ADHD is not the presence of these behaviors, but their frequency, severity, and the degree to which they interfere with your child's daily life at home, in school, and with friends. ADHD symptoms must also be present in more than one setting and have been observed for at least six months. If you see occasional scattered moments, that is childhood. If you see a persistent pattern that is causing real difficulty, that is worth exploring.

SIGNS OF INATTENTIVE ADHD

This is the most commonly missed presentation, especially in girls and children of color. These children are often described as daydreamers, spacey, or unmotivated. They rarely disrupt the classroom, so they fall through the cracks.

- **Difficulty sustaining attention.**

Struggles to stay focused on tasks like homework, reading, or following multi-step instructions. Starts tasks but rarely finishes them without reminders.

- **Seems not to listen.**

Often appears to be in their own world, even when spoken to directly. Does not retain verbal instructions easily.

- **Careless mistakes.**

Makes frequent errors in schoolwork that are not due to lack of ability. Rushes through work without checking it.

- **Easily distracted.**

Loses focus at the slightest noise or change in the room. Has difficulty filtering out background distractions.

- **Forgetfulness and losing things.**

Routinely forgets homework, loses supplies, misplaces items needed daily. Struggles to remember steps in a routine even after practicing them.

- **Avoids tasks requiring sustained effort.**

Resists or complains about homework, reading, or other activities that require prolonged mental focus. This is not laziness. It is a real neurological challenge.

- **Disorganization.**

Backpack, desk, and room are consistently chaotic. Has difficulty managing time or sequencing tasks in the right order.

SIGNS OF HYPERACTIVE AND IMPULSIVE ADHD

These behaviors tend to be more visible and are more often flagged by teachers early. They are more commonly observed in boys, though any child can present this way.

- **Constant movement.**

Fidgets, squirms, or leaves their seat when expected to remain still. Runs or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate.

- **Talks excessively.**

Talks without pause, often at inappropriate moments. Has difficulty modulating volume or stopping when asked.

- **Blurts out answers.**

Cannot wait to be called on. Answers before questions are finished. This is not rudeness. It is impulse control.

- **Difficulty waiting their turn.**

Struggles in line, during games, or in group settings. Gets frustrated and acts out when asked to wait.

- **Interrupts or intrudes.**

Interrupts conversations, jumps into games uninvited, or takes over others' activities without awareness.

- **Driven by a motor.**

Seems unable to slow down or relax, even in calm settings. Has difficulty with quiet activities like reading or drawing.

A NOTE ON RACE, CULTURE, AND MISSED DIAGNOSES

Research consistently shows that Black and Latino children are diagnosed with ADHD at significantly lower rates than white peers displaying the same symptoms. In Black and Latino communities, ADHD behaviors are more often labeled as defiance or a discipline problem rather than recognized as a neurodevelopmental difference. Girls across all communities are diagnosed an average of five years later than boys. If you have been told your child is just being difficult, and something still does not feel right, trust your instinct. You know your child.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECOGNIZE THESE SIGNS

Step 1: Start with your pediatrician.

Your child's primary care provider is the right first call. They can conduct an initial evaluation, gather information from teachers and caregivers, and rule out other causes. This is often the most accessible and least expensive starting point. Bring notes about the specific behaviors you have observed, when they occur, and how long they have been present.

Step 2: If you hit a wall, ask for a referral.

If your pediatrician does not have concerns but yours persist, ask for a referral to a developmental pediatrician, child psychiatrist, or psychologist who specializes in ADHD. A thorough evaluation includes input from parents, teachers, and the child across multiple settings. You are your child's best advocate.

CHADD (Children and Adults with ADHD)

www.chadd.org | Evidence-based information on ADHD for families and providers.

NAMI HelpLine

800-950-6264 or text 'NAMI' to 62640 | nami.org | M-F 10 a.m.-10 p.m. ET

CDC ADHD Resource Center

www.cdc.gov/adhd | Diagnosis criteria, treatment guidance, and family resources.

The Society for ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions

www.societyforadhd.org | info@societyforadhd.org

The Society for ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions is the only ADHD organization in the United States with a dedicated focus on the faith community. We are a faith-informed, community-rooted secular nonprofit providing science-backed resources, education, and community for neurodivergent individuals and the families, faith communities, and professionals who support them.

www.societyforadhd.org | info@societyforadhd.org