Child and Family Counseling

Medication can help the child with ADHD in everyday life. He or she may be better able to control some of the behavior problems that may have led to trouble with parents and siblings. However, the entire family may need special help in managing ADHD. Many helpful counseling interventions are available. They include:

**Behavioral Therapy** helps people learn ways to change behaviors. Therapy may focus on things like how to arrange tasks or school work. It may focus on how to watch one's own behavior and give self-praise or rewards for controlling anger or thinking before acting.

**Social Skills Training** can also help the child with ADHD learn new behaviors. In social skills training, the therapist discusses and models how the child can act when playing and working with other children. The child can then practice these skills. Training may also focus on things like how to wait for a turn, share toys, ask for help, or respond to teasing.

**Support Groups** help parents connect with others who have children with ADHD. Sharing stories with others who have similar problems can be powerful.

**Psychotherapy** works to help people with ADHD improve their self-esteem. A child can talk with the therapist about upsetting thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The child learns helpful ways of dealing with emotions.

ADHD and School

Contact the child's teacher to find out what support groups/resources are available to you. By taking an active role with the school team, parents can develop a full understanding of how ADHD affects the child and help the team develop a suitable and helpful school program. This team may consist of the principal, a special educator and teacher(s) that know the child.

It is important that parents keep records of all information about the child. This includes copies of all evaluations and documents from any meetings. Information about ADHD and a record of the child's prior treatments are helpful. Contact information for the experts who have worked with the child also helps. These records assist the parent to advocate for the child's best interest in school settings.

The more knowledge the parent has about the child's rights, the better the chance the child will maximize his or her success. There are two education laws that protect the child's rights: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Parents can learn more about these rights from their state's parent training and information center: http://www.taalliance.org/centers.

For More Information

For information on support groups and access to tools a parent can use to help their child, visit the Live And Work Well website at http://liveandworkwell.com.

For help finding a behavioral health professional that can help with ADHD, contact Customer Service.

- Harvard Pilgrim Health Care: (888) 777-4742

Parents can find out more about ADHD by visiting these websites:

- **National Institute of Mental Health**

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
  [http://aap.org/parents.html](http://aap.org/parents.html)

- **Bright Futures**
  [http://www.brightfutures.org](http://www.brightfutures.org)

- **Children and Adults with ADHD**
  [http://www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)

The text in this brochure is for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Additionally, the above links are not part of the live and work well website. While we believe you may find value in reading the contents of these sites, we do not control the contents, products or services of the websites. Do not use the information to diagnose or treat a health problem without first consulting a qualified health care provider.

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What is ADHD?
Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common behavioral conditions among children. With symptoms that generally appear early in a child's life, ADHD affects about 3-9% of school-age children.

All children may exhibit these common behaviors from time to time, but the child with ADHD exhibits them more often and more intensely. It is important that the child receive a thorough exam and correct diagnosis by a trained specialist. Specifically, ADHD is linked to three main types of behavior:

- Trouble paying attention (inattention)
- Trouble staying still (hyperactivity)
- Trouble controlling impulses (impulsivity)

Causes of ADHD
The exact causes of ADHD are not known. Scientists believe it may be caused by a chemical imbalance in the part of the brain that helps to control behavior.

Diagnosing ADHD
No single test can sufficiently diagnose ADHD. It is important to find a professional trained in diagnosing and treating ADHD. These experts include child psychiatrists and psychologists, developmental/behavioral pediatricians or clinical social workers. The specialist will conduct a thorough exam to assess whether a child has ADHD. He or she is likely to:

- Gather information to rule out other possible reasons for the child’s behavior
- Review school and medical records
- Assess the home and classroom settings, and find out how the child’s parents and teachers deal with the child
- Gather information on the child’s ongoing behavior
- Interview the child’s teachers and parents
- Evaluate the child for social adjustment, mental health, and learning abilities
- Observe the child’s behavior in home and classroom situations that demand self-control or that require sustained attention

The specialist will then put together a profile of the child’s behavior and if the child’s symptoms are significant and long-standing, he or she may be diagnosed with ADHD.

Treatment for ADHD
Parenting a child with ADHD can be stressful and overwhelming at times. It is important to remember that with proper treatment, the child with ADHD can and will succeed. There is no cure for ADHD, but there are ways to successfully manage its symptoms.

Each family should work closely with the child’s health care provider to design a treatment plan tailored to the unique needs of the child and family. A treatment plan may include medication and child and family counseling.

Medications for ADHD
There are a number of different medications used to treat ADHD. Some children get better results from one medication, some from another. It is important to work with the doctor who prescribes the medication to find the right one and the right dosage. In order to control ADHD symptoms, medications must be taken as prescribed.

One type of medication is from a class of drugs known as stimulants. When used under a doctor’s care, stimulants are considered quite safe. Stimulants do not make the child feel “high,” although some children say they feel different or funny. Stimulants can greatly reduce symptoms of ADHD. The medications do not “cure” the condition, but they do help the child focus. They have been shown to help the child do better at school, home, and play, and they may even improve physical coordination, such as that needed in handwriting.

When a doctor prescribes a new stimulant medication to a child, it is recommended that the child see the prescribing doctor again within 30 days. After that, it is recommended that the child see a health care provider for ADHD at least twice in the next nine months.

If stimulants don’t work or if the ADHD occurs with another disorder, other types of medications may be used.

Side Effects of ADHD Stimulant Medications:
Most side effects of stimulant medications are minor. The side effects are usually related to the amount of medication taken. Higher doses cause more side effects. The most common side effects are decreased appetite, problems sleeping, increased anxiety, and/or irritability. The child may also report mild stomach aches or headaches.