

Advice For Parents Of Hyperactive Kids

(StatePoint) Almost all children have times when their attention or behavior veers out of control. From rambunctious play to being distracted during homework time, parents often have to find creative solutions to keep their children on task.

However, for some children, hyperactivity and inattentiveness are more than an occasional problem.

“Children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, have behavior problems that are so frequent and severe they interfere with their ability to function adequately on a daily basis,” says Mark Wolraich, MD, FAAP, of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The AAP has released new guidelines for physicians for diagnosing and treating ADHD in children between 4 and 18 years of age. The previous guidelines covered children between 6 and 12 years.

Parents who are concerned about their child’s inattentiveness or hyperactivity should keep the following symptom guidelines in mind:

- **Early childhood (Ages 3-7):** It’s normal for children to sometimes run in circles or ask constant questions at this age. But if your child does them frequently, gets injured often, and won’t sit down to eat or be read to, he or she may be displaying problematic hyperactive behavior.

- **Middle childhood (Ages 7-12):** During this age range, children should be able to complete games, but may occasionally act impulsively when excited. Problematic behavior usually includes frequently butting in to other children’s games, interrupting others, and fidgeting quite a bit even while watching television.

- **Adolescence (Ages 13-18):** Normal teens usually engage in some risky social behavior, while hyperactive teens have trouble paying attention, are often restless and fidgety while doing quiet activities, interrupt and “bug” other people, and frequently have difficulties completing their school work.

“ADHD is a chronic condition of the brain that can impact children’s learning, ability to regulate their behavior, social skills and self-esteem,” says Dr. Wolraich. “But once a diagnosis is confirmed, ADHD treatments are available to help them control their



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There are many treatments to help children who are easily distracted.

behaviors.”

To help parents understand the new guidance on ADHD, the AAP has published a detailed and updated consumer resource book entitled “ADHD: What Every Parent Needs to Know.” In it, parents can find the newest treatment options and management strategies that balance behavior therapy, medications and parenting techniques.

For example, in preschool children with ADHD, pediatricians are now being instructed to first try behavioral interventions, such as group or individual parent training in behavior management techniques. For preschoolers with moderate to severe symptoms who don’t exhibit significant improvement after behavior therapy, medication may be considered. For elementary school children and adolescents, the AAP recommends both medications and behavior therapy.

More information on the symptoms and treatment of ADHD can be found on the AAP’s website for parents, www.healthychildren.org/adhd.

ADHD is a chronic condition that requires a team approach, according to experts, including input from patients, their parents, pediatricians, therapists, and teachers.
