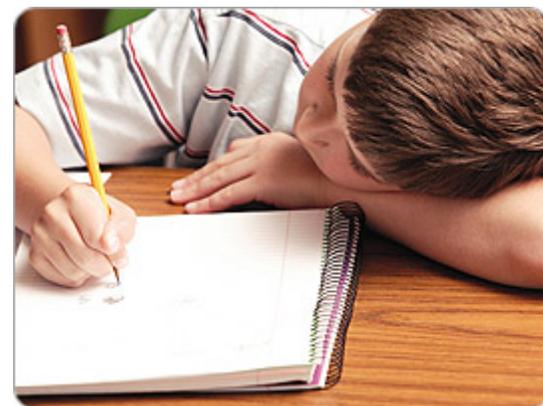


Overview of Assessment for ADHD

A child's teacher may be the first person to suspect that a child has ADHD, especially if he is hyperactive and often disrupts class. Alternatively, parents may realize that their child is having problems if she does poorly at school. In either case, the child should be assessed by a doctor or psychologist who can diagnose ADHD.



ADHD is not always easy to diagnose, for several reasons:

- The symptoms of ADHD are inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity, but it is normal for all children to be restless, impulsive, or inattentive sometimes.
- There is no one specific test for ADHD.
- Children behave differently in different settings and with different people.
- The symptoms of ADHD look different in different children, in boys and girls, and at different ages.

For these reasons, the doctor will need as much information as possible from you, your child, your child's teacher, and other caregivers.

Sources of information

The doctor will begin by taking your child's medical history and by doing a physical examination. She will ask your child some questions. She will then ask you and your child's teacher for information about:

- your child's behaviour at home, at school, and in other situations
- how long your child has had the symptoms
- whether the symptoms cause problems for your child
- your child's schoolwork

If your child spends time in other settings, such as daycare, clubs, or a religious institution, the doctor may ask for information from adults who know your child in those settings as well.

If your child has been to see another health care professional, the doctor may also ask for information from that person.

This information will help the doctor determine whether your child has ADHD or some other condition.

Will your child need to have a lot of tests?

In general, the doctor will talk to and observe your child, rather than drawing blood or taking X-rays or MRI scans. There is no genetic test, blood test, or brain imaging test that identifies ADHD. However, if the doctor suspects that something else is causing your child's symptoms, she may order some other tests, such as hearing or vision tests.

Your child's doctor may also link you with other specialists who may perform tests of their own, such as:

- a speech and language pathologist
- a psychologist, who may assess your child's learning, IQ, and academic achievement

None of these tests will confirm or rule out ADHD. However, they will give the team more information about your child's situation, and may identify other issues that are causing problems.

What will the diagnosis include?

Elements of the diagnosis may include:

- the subtype of ADHD, meaning whether your child has mostly inattentive symptoms, mostly hyperactive/impulsive symptoms, or both
- whether your child has any associated conditions (comorbidities), such as a learning disability, anxiety disorder, or a mood disorder

What happens after the diagnosis of ADHD?

Once your child has been diagnosed with ADHD, treatment can begin. You, your child's doctor or psychologist, and the school will need to work together on a treatment plan. This plan may include both medication and behavioural therapy.

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Notes: