



The Children's Attention Project (CAP)

Frequently Asked Questions About ADHD

What is ADHD?

Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have difficulties paying attention. They can also be impulsive and hyperactive. The main symptoms of ADHD are:

- **Inattention:** inability to concentrate on a task, difficulty in finishing work or maintaining close attention to a task and poor organisation.
- **Impulsivity:** interrupting, blurting out answers, rushing tasks and making careless mistakes and difficulty in functioning in groups.
- **Hyperactivity:** fidgeting, squirming, inability to remain seated and wandering around the classroom.

Not all children with ADHD have all of these features. For example, some children only experience inattentive symptoms. All children do some of these things, some of the time. The difference is that children with ADHD experience these difficulties to a level where it impacts on their ability to function well.

How many children have ADHD?

- About 5% of school-age children worldwide meet diagnostic criteria for ADHD¹. This equates to about 200,000 children in Australia.
- ADHD affects boys about 3 times more often than girls.

What causes ADHD?

- There is no one cause for ADHD.
- ADHD is caused by both environmental and genetic factors. Many children with ADHD have somebody else in their family that has ADHD.
- Children with ADHD are found in all socioeconomic and ethnic groups.

What other difficulties do children with ADHD experience?

- Most children with ADHD will also have one or more co-existing problems including specific learning difficulties, language impairment, oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety, depression, conduct disorder, and/or tics.
- Children with ADHD can find themselves socially isolated. Other children don't understand their impatient behaviour, their inability to follow classroom and playground rules or the way they rapidly change from one activity to another.

How is ADHD treated?

- ADHD is most commonly treated with stimulant medication in combination with behavioural strategies for parents at home and teachers at school.
 - Parent management strategies include helping parents to respond to child behaviours consistently and helping parents to effectively use positive reinforcement and logical consequences to promote positive child behaviours.
 - Stimulant medication is effective in treating the main symptoms of ADHD (e.g., inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity), while behavioural interventions are effective in treating the other difficulties associated with ADHD (e.g., conduct problems).

What happens to children with ADHD over time?

- Studies of children with ADHD attending clinics typically demonstrate that these children are at risk of poorer outcomes in adolescence and adulthood including academic underachievement, early school drop-out, psychiatric difficulties and poor occupational functioning.
- Little is known about what happens to children with ADHD identified in the community. **The purpose of the Children's Attention Project is to find out what helps these children to achieve better outcomes.**