

Early Signs and Next Steps for ADHD

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects how a person focuses, controls their actions, and manages their activity level. It can look different across individuals and cultures.

ADHD is not only about attention or activity, but it can also affect mental health. Children and adults with ADHD may feel very frustrated, stressed, or struggle with confidence, and some may also experience anxiety or depression.



ADHD may show up at different ages:

Preschool Children

- ❑ High activity levels, always “on the go”
- ❑ Trouble staying seated or playing quietly
- ❑ Short attention span for age-appropriate tasks
- ❑ Difficulty following simple instructions
- ❑ Frequent tantrums or emotional outbursts
- ❑ Impulsive behaviors (running into danger, grabbing toys)



School Age Children

- ❑ Difficulty completing schoolwork or chores
- ❑ Easily distracted by noises or movement
- ❑ Forgetting daily tasks or losing items
- ❑ Trouble waiting their turn or interrupting others
- ❑ Difficulties making or keeping friends



Adolescents

- ❑ Poor organization and time management
- ❑ Frequent missed deadlines or assignments
- ❑ Often show frustration, low tolerance for stress
- ❑ Risk-taking or impulsive behaviors
- ❑ Low self-esteem or frustration in academic or social settings

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Next Steps After Noticing Signs

1 Collecting Information

Observe patterns at home, school, and social settings.

2 Talking to a Pediatrician

Ask for an ADHD screening and referral.



(if needed)

3 Exploring Behavioral Therapy

Consider parenting training and individual therapy.

4 Psychiatric Medication Consultation

Discuss whether medication may help with focus and controlling their own actions and emotions.

Consider School-Based Support: IEP

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a school support plan made to help students with learning needs succeed through personal goals, help in the classroom, and supportive services. It creates a structured plan and ensures that families and schools work together so students get the support they need to thrive.

IEP Navigation

- STEP 1** Identify the challenge and needs
- STEP 2** Submit an evaluation request to school
- STEP 3** School must respond within 10 days and provide a Consent for Evaluation
- STEP 4** Conduct evaluation
- STEP 5** Attend eligibility meeting (Committee on Special Education)
- STEP 6** Develop IEP
- STEP 7** Implement IEP and conduct annual review

Consider the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

- OPWDD serves individuals with developmental disabilities
- ADHD alone usually does not qualify
- Children with ADHD plus intellectual disability, autism, or significant adaptive delays may be eligible

Contact the OPWDD Front Door at 866-946-9733 to determine eligibility.