

ADHD & Ritalin

Increased awareness of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) has led to many advances in treatment. All children may be overly active at times, their attention spans may be short, and they may act without thinking. However, some of the following signs may require treatment for this disorder.

If your child:

- seems more active than others, at the same age
- is notoriously forgetful, disorganized, and always losing things
- receives teachers complaints that your child can't stay seated or quiet
- blurts out answers instead of waiting to be called on
- pays more attention to the traffic in the hall than to the teacher
- behaves aggressively
- struggles academically

A comprehensive evaluation is necessary to establish a diagnosis, rule out other causes and determine the presence or absence of co-occurring conditions. Such an evaluation should include a clinical assessment of the individuals academic, social and emotional functioning and developmental abilities. Additional tests may include intelligence testing, measures of attention span and parent and teacher rating scales. A medical exam by a physician is also important. Diagnosing AD/HD in an adult requires an examination of childhood, academic and behavioral history. The problems need to be rooted in childhood but persist in adulthood.

For most children and adults with AD/HD , medication is an integral part of treatment. Medication is not used to control behavior. Medication is used to improve the symptoms of AD/HD. Research shows that children and adults who take medication for the symptoms of AD/HD attribute their success to themselves, not to the medication.

“Psychostimulant” compounds are the most widely used medications for the management of AD/HD- related symptoms. It is believed that psychostimulant medications change the levels of transmitter chemicals available to various

neurotransmitter systems in the brain. A common psychostimulant medication is methylphenidate (Ritalin). Hundreds of studies on thousands of children have been conducted regarding the effects of psychostimulant medications, making them among the most studied medications in pharmacological history. Relatively few long term effects side effects have been identified. The most common side effects are reduction in appetite and difficulty sleeping. These side effects are usually managed by changing the dose and the scheduling for short- acting medications, or by changing to a prolonged release formula.