

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder

I. What is Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) refers to the condition whereby a child's attentiveness, degree of activity and ability to control his/her emotions show significant discrepancy to those of children at the same age, leading to difficulties in the child's learning, social interactions and family life.

II. What are the symptoms of children with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder?

1. Inattentiveness


- Easily distracted and difficult to concentrate
- Often do not follow instructions
- Often fail to complete tasks on their own initiative
- Fail to pay attention to details and often make careless mistakes
- Fail to pay attention to what others are saying
- Often lose books, stationery and other belongings


2. Hyperactivity


- Often fidget
- Fail to play quietly
- Talk excessively


3. Impulsivity

- Have difficulty taking turns at games or other activities
- Fail to think before action
- Often interrupt others' speech or activities

 Some children with AD/HD mainly show attention deficit only, others mainly show hyperactivity, while some show both symptoms.

 These symptoms are mostly noticed by teachers or parents at kindergarten or early primary years. Such symptoms may persist into adolescence and adulthood.

 Children consistently exhibit the above symptoms in different settings (including at home and at school), leading to obvious difficulties in learning and social interactions.

 Children may have other co-existing developmental disorders (e.g. dyslexia).

III. What causes Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder?

The exact cause of AD/HD has yet to be determined, but research has mainly suggested the following:

1. Imbalance of Neurotransmitters of the Brain

- Attentiveness is controlled by the balance of certain neurotransmitters of the brain

2. Genetic Factors

- Hereditary factors are present, with a higher prevalence noted in males

3. Environmental Factors

- Environmental factors, such as family background, family members' attitude and style in parenting as well as regularity in daily activities, do not directly lead to AD/HD. Yet, such environmental factors and the degree of acceptance of these children by their family members and teachers may ease or worsen their symptoms.

IV. How does Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder affect development of children?

1. At Home

- Often engage in dangerous activities, e.g. bumping against objects, jumping from furniture, climbing windows
- Cannot be engaged in quiet play
- Messy in daily routine
- Parents may harshly criticise their children, beating and scolding them for their misbehaviour, resulting in poor parent-child relationship

2. At School

- Often fail to remain seated, stay in queue or listen to teachers' instructions attentively
- Have difficulty concentrating on lessons and doing class work, frequently make careless mistakes during examinations, thus adversely affecting academic results
- Poor compliance to school regulations and get punished frequently

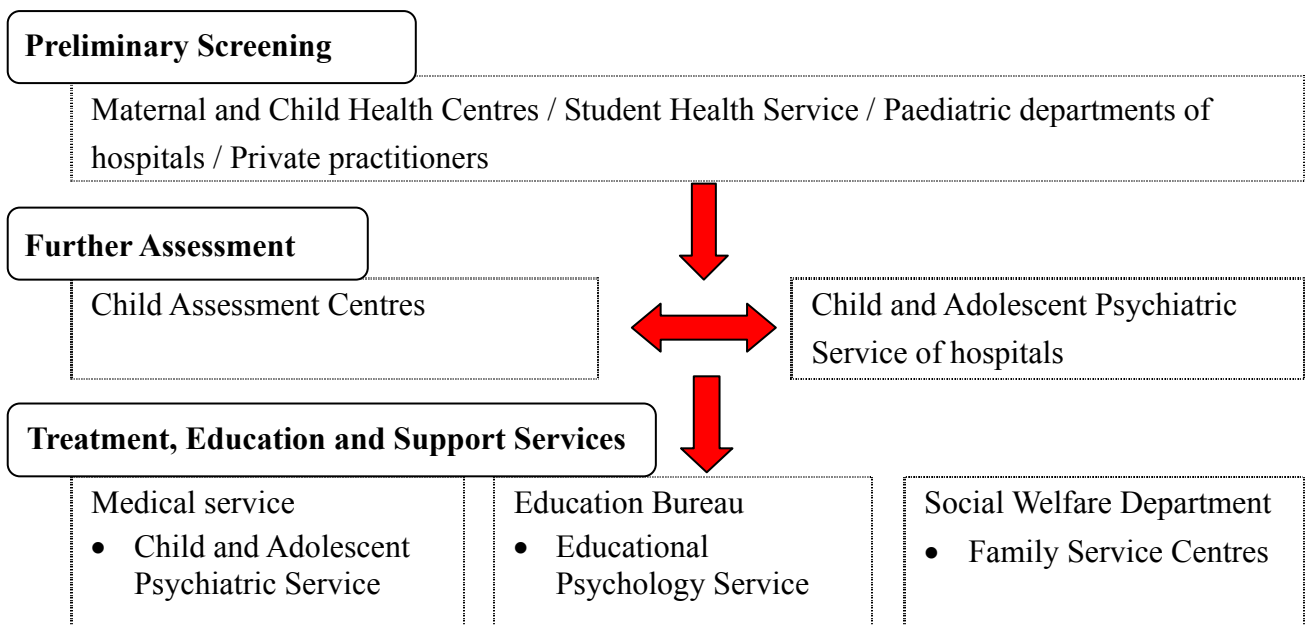
3. At Social Occasions

- Unable to comply with rules of games, share toys or play co-operatively, thus easily rejected by peers
- Often being labelled as "naughty" and "difficult to teach"

4. Self-perception

- Consider oneself as a loser
- Low self-image

V. Where can parents seek help if their child is suspected to have Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder?



VI. How can parents help their child with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder?

1. Maintain regular daily routines

- Establish regular daily routines and draw up work schedule
- Arrange a fixed workplace for the child and require tidying up of the area daily
- Use aids like alarm clocks, checklists and slogans to remind the child of his/her tasks
- Minimise environmental disturbances to the child, e.g. TV noise

2. Allocate working time slots

- Arrange short breaks for the child before his/her attention weakens so as to increase efficiency

3. Be better prepared

- Develop contingency plans in advance for occasions in which the child often has problems, e.g. bringing the child's favourite small toys or books to restaurant to prevent misbehaviour

4. Encourage good behaviour

- Praise the child specifically for positive behaviour
- Reward the child immediately after his/her good behaviour, give verbal praise or tangible rewards frequently
- Use less punishment
- Set specific and achievable goals with the child and encourage him/her to put ongoing efforts in attaining such goals through awarding of points or stickers

Enquiry Numbers and Related Websites

Government Bureau / Departments

- Department of Health
 - Child Assessment Service 2246 6633
www.dhcas.gov.hk
 - Family Health Service 2961 8855
(Maternal and Child Health Centres) www.fhs.gov.hk
 - Student Health Service 2349 2772
www.dh.gov.hk
 - Education Bureau 2891 0088
(24-Hour Hotline) <http://serc.edb.gov.hk>
- ### Other Organisations
- Hospital Authority 2300 6555
(General Enquiry) www.ha.org.hk
- ### Overseas
- Children & Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders www.chadd.org

Copyright © 2008

Child Assessment service, Department of Health, HKSAR