



PARENTING YOUR CHILD WITH ADHD

Have you ever felt frustrated with your child for not finishing their chores, how forgetful they are, or how often they lose things? How many times have you watched your child running around the house, climbing on, and jumping off furniture as if they're "motor driven"? Maybe there's a note from their teacher with complaints of interruptions in class, and not waiting for their turn at the playground.

Does any of this sound familiar? I'm Kathy Moskowitz, the Psychologist working at Kaiser Permanente in Northern California. I invite you to join me for a few minutes as I describe Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, and the special challenges that a child with ADHD faces. I would also like to share with you some parenting tips, and tell you about the resources available at Kaiser Permanente.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a problem that begins in early childhood. It is biologically based, and is often genetically linked. Too much sugar, artificial food coloring, video games or television, do not cause ADHD. Nor does poor parenting. Your child's ADHD is neither your, nor your child's fault!

ADHD is more common than you might think. It affects three to five percent of children, or approximately two million children in the United States. Boys are diagnosed with ADHD about two and half times more than girls. In a class of 25 to 30 children, at least one child will have ADHD.

Most children who are diagnosed with ADHD have a combination of symptoms which include inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Some children however, have predominance in one symptom cluster or another.

The most obvious symptom of ADHD for some children will be problems with hyperactive or impulsive behavior. Children with ADHD who exhibit hyperactive symptoms are physically overactive—running, jumping, and always "on-the-go". They squirm in their seats and they fidget.

Impulsive children with ADHD may take unnecessary risks, such as running into traffic. They may interrupt others, blurt out answers, and have trouble waiting in line.

For most children with ADHD the primary difficulty will be with inattention. These children are often careless, lose things and are forgetful. Some children with attention problems will appear as if their mind is elsewhere, and are not listening. They may be viewed as daydreamers, and can be overlooked as having ADHD. Their teachers may comment, "Your child could do so much better, if they would only apply themselves." It is important to be aware of, and recognize these less noticeable children, who also need and deserve our help.

All children have occasional problems with concentration, restlessness, and impulsivity. In order to be diagnosed with ADHD, however, a child has to have a lot more difficulty than others their

age, and this has to cause significant problems in achievement, performance, and social relationships.

At Kaiser Permanente, we have developed an in-depth method of evaluating children for possible ADHD. In addition to using parent and teacher observations and rating scales as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, we also use trained mental health and medical specialists to directly observe children in a small group setting.

Children with ADHD, especially those without appropriate treatment, may become depressed, anxious, uncooperative, or defiant. They are also at higher risk for developing alcohol and drug problems. Accurately recognizing and treating ADHD may help prevent your child from developing these other problems.

Research has shown that medication is the most effective treatment for ADHD. Medication can help in lengthening the child's attention span, increasing the child's ability to focus, and by reducing impulsivity and hyperactivity. Most children respond well to stimulant medication, although there are now other medication treatment options available. Medication alone however, is often not sufficient to deal with the academic and social problems frequently associated with ADHD.

There are a variety of ways parents can assist their child with ADHD to be successful and well adjusted. One of the most important things a parent can do is work to maintain a good relationship, using positive reinforcement and clear communication. Be consistent, and help your child understand and accept your expectations for appropriate behavior.

Another way to support your child is by encouraging them to participate in activities where they can have fun and feel successful. That sense of success can improve self-esteem, and protect against depression. As a parent, you can also be of great assistance in helping your child to develop and maintain friendships.

At Kaiser Permanente we have ADHD services for parents and youth, health education materials, and family counseling to assist you. You can learn more about these by talking with your child's pediatrician or your Mental Health provider. You can also call or visit the Health Education or Wellness Center, where you can get information about relevant classes, and borrow books and videos about ADHD.

At the end of this presentation, we will offer you a list of resources including the Kaiser Permanente website and others where you can learn more about ADHD, and find out how to contact your local Psychiatry or Mental Health Department.

I hope you have found this presentation helpful. Remember – you are not at fault for your child's ADHD. Children with ADHD are often playful, funny, curious, creative, and bright. With information, medication and professional guidance, you can help your child along their path to a happy and successful life.

RESOURCES

Websites and Hotlines:

Kaiser Permanente,
<http://www.members.kp.org>

National Institute of Mental Health,
www.nimh.nih.gov, 1-800-647-2642

Children and Adults with ADHD (CHADD)
www.chadd.org, 1-800-233-4050

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