



Diagnosis of ADHD

Because there's no test that can determine the presence of ADHD, a diagnosis depends on a complete evaluation.



Many children and adolescents diagnosed with ADHD are evaluated and treated by primary care doctors including pediatricians and family practitioners, but your child may also be referred to one of several different specialists (psychiatrists, psychologists, neurologists) especially when the diagnosis is in doubt, or if there are other concerns, such as Tourette syndrome, a learning disability, anxiety, or depression.

To be considered for a diagnosis of ADHD:

- a child must display behaviors from one of the three subtypes before age 7
- these behaviors must be more severe than in other kids the same age
- the behaviors must last for at least 6 months
- the behaviors must occur in and negatively affect at least two areas of a child's life (such as school, home, daycare settings, or friendships)

The behaviors must also not only be linked to stress at home. Kids who have experienced a divorce, a move, an illness, a change in school, or other significant life event may suddenly begin to act out or become forgetful. To avoid a misdiagnosis, it's important to consider whether these factors played a role in the onset of symptoms.

Charleston Promise Neighborhood is a non-profit organization that works to improve the lives of children and families in the 5.6 square mile area of the "neck" between Charleston and North Charleston. KidsWell is Charleston Promise Neighborhood's health and wellness initiative that includes School-Based Health Clinics at Sanders-Clyde Creative Arts School, James Simons Elementary, Chicora School of Communications, and Mary Ford Elementary. www.charlestonpromise.org

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For additional information, contact your child's doctor or school nurse.

First, your child's doctor may perform a physical examination and take a medical history that includes questions about any concerns and symptoms, your child's past health, your family's health, any medications your child is taking, any allergies your child may have, and other issues.

The doctor may also check hearing and vision so other medical conditions can be ruled out. Because some emotional conditions, such as extreme stress, depression, and anxiety, can also look like ADHD, you'll likely be asked to fill out questionnaires to help rule them out.

You'll be asked many questions about your child's development and behaviors at home, school, and among friends. Other adults who see your child regularly (like teachers, who are often the first to notice ADHD symptoms) probably will be consulted, too. An educational evaluation, which usually includes a school psychologist, may also be done. It's important for everyone involved to be as honest and thorough as possible about your child's strengths and weaknesses.



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