

What is AD/HD?

Also called ADD or ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics as a chronic neurological condition resulting from persisting dysfunction within the central nervous system. It is not related to gender, level of intelligence or cultural environment. Although genetic factors or brain injury are sometimes indicated, the cause in most instances is not known. According to the U.S. National Institute of Health, between 3% and 5% of the nation's population may have AD/HD. The primary symptoms of AD/HD can be divided into two main categories: Symptoms of Inattention and Symptoms of Hyperactivity/Impulsivity.

Symptoms of Inattention include (diagnosis requires at least six of the following 9 symptoms, as defined by DSM-IV, a diagnostic manual used by professionals):

- Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork
- Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork or chores
- Often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Often avoids tasks that require sustained mental effort (schoolwork or homework)
- Often loses things necessary for tasks (pencils, books, school assignments)
- Often is distracted by extraneous stimuli
- Often forgetful in daily activities

Symptoms of Hyperactivity/Impulsivity include (diagnosis requires at least six of the following 9 symptoms, as defined by DSM-IV):

- Often fidgets with hands and feet or squirms in seat.
- Often leaves seat when remaining seated is expected.
- Often has trouble playing quietly or engaging in leisure activities.
- Often talks excessively.
- Often runs about or climbs excessively
- Often is "on the go" or acts as if driven by a motor
- Often blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Often has difficulty waiting for his/her turn
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others

In addition, other diagnostic criteria include: symptoms were present before age 7, evidence of some impaired function in two or more settings (school, home, work), and clear evidence of impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning.

Diagnosis and treatment of AD/HD continues to be highly controversial, but usually diagnosis should include:

- A careful history taken from parents and teachers,
- Standardized questionnaires, such as the Achenbach's Child Behavior Checklist or the Connor's Scale)
- Psycho educational testing and continuous performance testing such as the TOVA or IVA
- Final diagnosis should be made by a medical professional, such as an MD, psychologist or psychiatrist. This last point is vitally important since many problems, disorders and illnesses have symptoms similar to AD/HD

Treatment of AD/HD typically includes:

- Behavioral management program
- Parenting strategies and consultation (if necessary)
- Consistent, structured environment
- Disability awareness training
- Medication (usually in combination with behavioral program)

Where can I learn more?

LDA of Minnesota: <http://ldaminnesota.org> or call (952) 922-8374

LDA of America: <http://ldaamerica.org>

CHADD, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: <http://chadd.org>

The ADD Organization: <http://www.add.org>

ADHD Support Company: <http://www.adhdsupportcompany.com>

LDA of Minnesota

For more than 36 years, **Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota** has been serving the needs of people of all ages at risk for learning disabilities or related learning difficulties by maximizing their potential so that they may lead more productive and fulfilled lives. Services include educational assessments, one-to-one and small group tutoring, consultations, family literacy activities, school-to-work transition programming, professional training, public education, and high-quality educational products.

LDA of Minnesota is the state affiliate of LDA of America, a non-profit organization of volunteers dedicated to identifying causes, promoting prevention of learning disabilities, and enhancing the quality of life for all individuals with learning disabilities and their families by encouraging effective identification and intervention, fostering research, and protecting their rights under law.