

ADHD IN CHILDREN

some common signs and symptoms

- Easily Distracted
- Daydreaming
- Forgetfulness
- Can't Sit Still
- Excessive Talking
- Careless Mistakes
- Risk-taking Behavior
- Impatience



Source: NCP
Articles, 2023

Definitions of ADHD

ADHD is more than just trouble paying attention; it affects core brain functions like focus and task completion. Children with ADHD may struggle with transitions between different environments, for example, school vs home, leading to behavioural challenges. ADHD often persists into adulthood, affecting daily life, work and relationships. It is a globally recognised condition, though it may be understood or named differently across cultures. Hammerness (2008) emphasises the long-term and cross-cultural relevance of ADHD.

Prevalence and impact

ADHD is a common childhood disorder, affecting approximately 5 to 10 % of young children worldwide (Lee et al.,20225). It is not limited to specific regions ADHD is recognised as a global issue. Core symptoms of ADHD significantly influence neurodevelopmental and mental growth, especially in early childhood. Children with ADHD are at increased risk of developing additional mental health conditions, such as mood disorders, later in life. Early diagnosis and intervention are essential to support healthy intellectual and emotional development (Lee et al.,2025).

Inattention

- Inattention is a form of ADHD where children struggle to follow instructions and complete tasks in order (Selikowitz,2021).
- They are easily distracted, often because the part of the brain that controls focus isn't working properly.
- Children with this type of ADHD may need frequent reminders from parents or teachers to do simple tasks.
- They often find it hard to work independently or stay on track without support.

Impulsivity

- Impulsivity involves choosing immediate satisfaction over delayed rewards, often leading to poor long-term outcomes (Bierman et al.,2017).
- Children with impulsivity may struggle to organise actions, plan ahead or control responses even when they know the better course of action (Beauchaine et al.,2017).
- According to Selikowitz (2021), impulsivity is a core presentation of ADHD, where children act without thinking or considering consequences.
- Such behaviour can lead to risky situations as these children often don't recognise danger.
- They may know how a task should be done but lack the self-regulation to execute it.
- Dr Russell Barkley explains ADHD is not about what a child knows but how hard it is for them to use what they know in real life (Selikowitz, 2021).

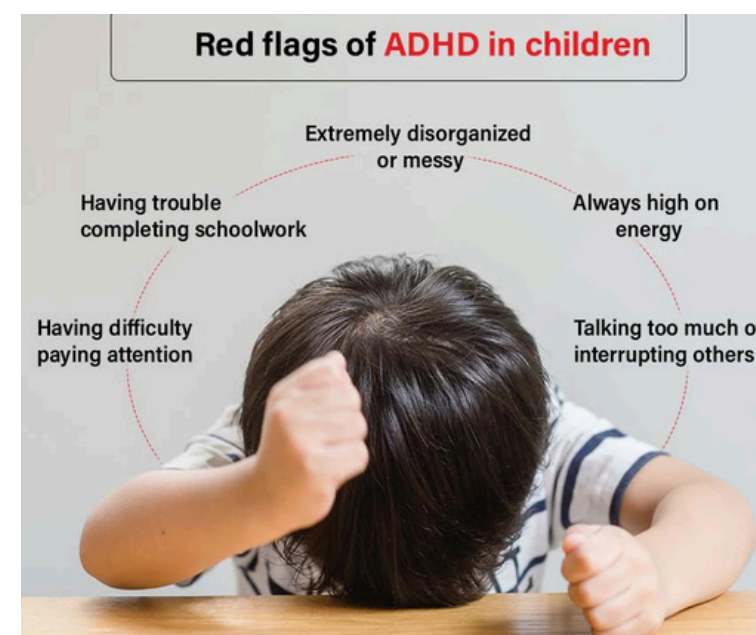
Hyperactivity

As described by NICE (2025), hyperactivity refers to a pattern of excessive movement and restlessness that stems from an overactive brain. In children, this often manifests as constant physical activity, such as running or climbing in inappropriate situations, an inability to remain still, and difficulty engaging quietly in activities. These behaviours are not simply high energy but are often impulsive and difficult for the child to control. As a result, their behaviour can be disruptive or exhausting for others, particularly in structured settings like classrooms or group activities. Hyperactivity is commonly associated with conditions like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), where such behaviour significantly interferes with daily functioning and development.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Assessment in Childhood ADHD

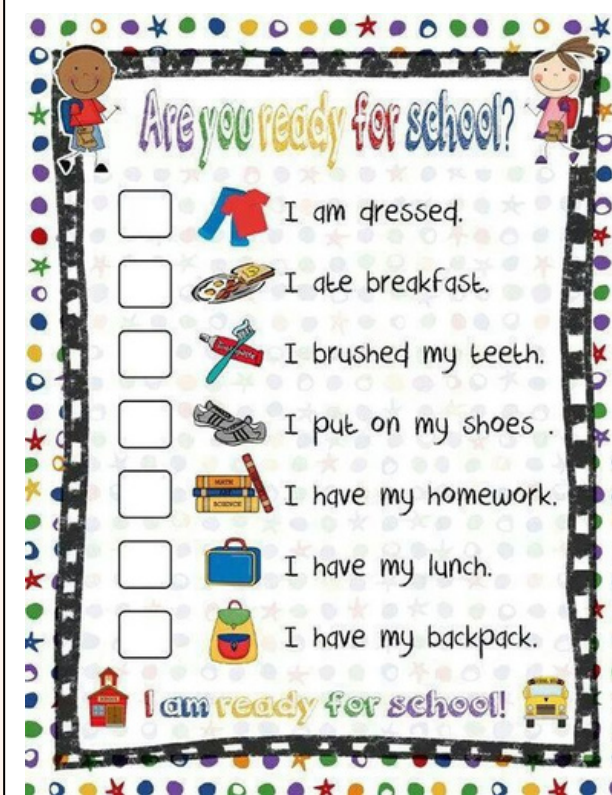
ADHD can significantly impact children's mental health and overall functioning (Gomez Cabezas et al.,2025). Effective assessment should be broad and detailed, not limited to just clinical symptoms. Evaluations often include parent interviews about behaviour and developmental history, a structured clinical interview assessing symptoms and functioning, and rating scales completed by parents and teachers. These tools are helpful but not sufficient. Children's reports can be valuable but are often less reliable due to potential biases or limited insight. Adult observations remain a very important part of accurate diagnosis and treatment planning.



Source: navimumbai.
kokilabenhospital, 2023

Identification of ADHD

Under the Early Years Framework section 3.61, at least one qualified staff member must be designated to identify additional needs in children (DFE,2024). The SEND code of practice section 5 requires regular assessment of children's development in early years settings. Every setting must have systems to identify additional needs and employ a trained Special Educational Needs coordinator (SENCO). The progress check at age 2 (EYFS) is a key milestone for detecting strengths and areas needing support. Practitioners must work closely with families and local authority services, keep parents informed and involved at all stages and use parental observations to support a well-rounded assessment. All interventions should be agreed upon with parents to maintain consistency across home and school environments.



Source: ADHD printable
checklist, no date

Diagnosis of ADHD

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a widely used tool for assessing emotional and behavioural issues in children (Algorta et al., 2016). It includes 25 questions covering conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer relationships, and prosocial behaviour. The SDQ helps provide a holistic view of a child's emotional and social development. It is particularly useful in identifying ADHD and guiding appropriate interventions.

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ADHD and early diagnosis matter

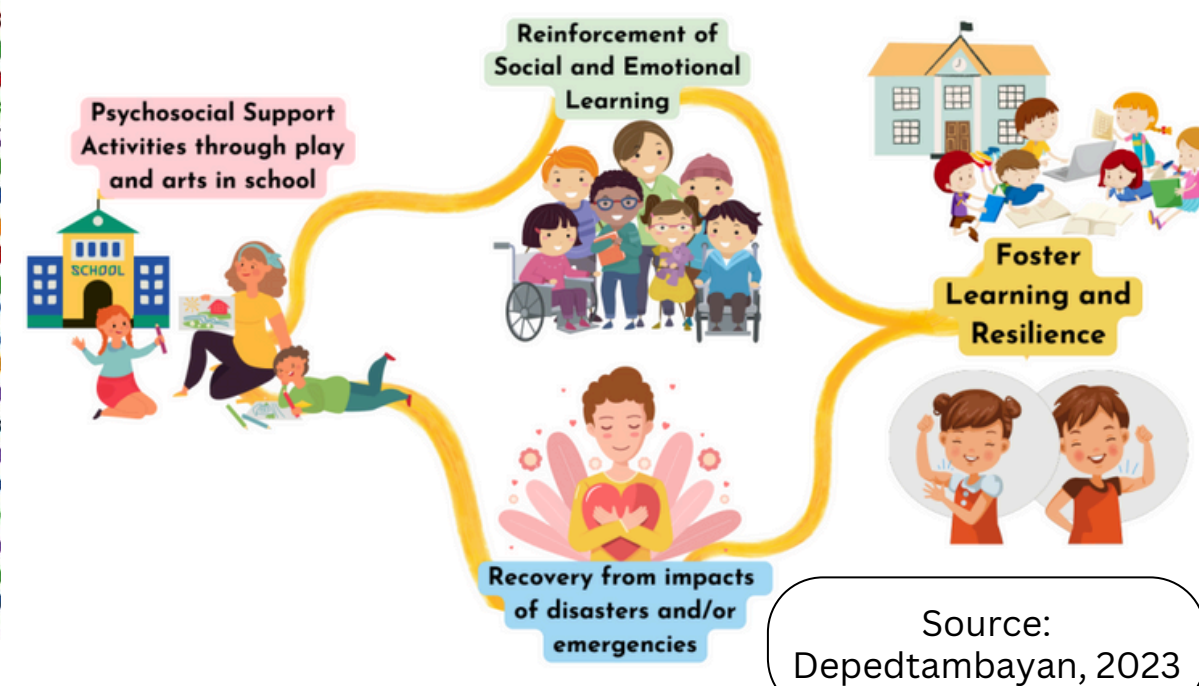
ADHD is a condition that usually begins in childhood and affects attention, self-control and behaviour (Ji, Y Zhang-Lea and Tran, J.2025).

Children with ADHD may struggle to stay focused or sit still Follow instructions and stay organised Think before acting and manage emotions These challenges can impact success at school and in school situations.

Early diagnosis is key It allows for timely support, helping children manage symptoms and reduce long-term risks. Recognising the signs and understanding the condition is an important step toward helping children thrive.

Barriers: parental and systemic

Assessment processes are often inconsistent or incomplete, sometimes due to limited funding or resources (Armitt et al., 2025; and Young et al., 2021). These gaps can delay or prevent accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment. Parents may unintentionally act as barriers to ADHD assessment due to anxiety, fear or confusion. Concerns about social stigma linked to mental health labels. Some parents avoid medical interventions, choosing alternative or natural therapies. Research (Fibert and Relton 2020) shows limited evidence supporting the long-term effectiveness of many non-medical treatments.



Source:
Depedtambayan, 2023

Psychosocial strategy

Practitioners play a key role by establishing consistent daily routines to help children with ADHD stay focused and calm. Collaboration with parents ensures consistency between school and home environments. Classrooms are adapted to create low-stimulation environments, reducing sensory overload and impulsivity. Extra time and staff support are often provided to children with ADHD during tasks and daily activities. A major challenge is limited funding and staff availability, which affects the quality and consistency of support (Young et al., 2021). Maintaining a predictable and structured environment helps reduce cognitive overload and manage symptoms. Structured psychological intervention includes parent support, has proven effective in managing ADHD (Dupaul et al.,2020).