

Dear TLC,

My child is continuing to have problems in school, how do I know if he has AD/HD*?

The best way to tell if your child has AD/HD is to get a complete assessment or proper diagnosis. There is no sure-fire test for diagnosing attention deficit disorder. To make a diagnosis the doctor must rely on the oldest test in all of medicine: the patient's own story, the history. The history is more important than any other test and should be obtained from at least three people including but not limited to parents/guardians, teachers, school staff, coaches, etc.

The most significant symptoms that characterize attention deficit disorder are:

- easy distractibility or inattention
- impulsivity
- restlessness or hyperactivity

Everyone experiences some of these symptoms some of the time, people who have AD/HD suffer from them much more frequently and with greater intensity than the average person. The symptoms must interfere with school, work, and/or relationships. The diagnosis rests not just upon the presence of the symptoms, but upon the duration and intensity as well.

Once the diagnosis of AD/HD is made, a treatment can be initiated, and a person's life and his family's life can change dramatically for the better.

Dear TLC,

How do I explain to my child who has AD/HD why he has to take medication every day?

Medications for AD/HD are much like eyeglasses for a near-sighted person—they help the person focus. No one should feel embarrassed about using medication. Just like glasses help to improve your vision, medication helps to improve the way your

brain functions. This makes focusing and learning a lot easier. The use of medications, if appropriate, is only one part of the treatment. Although the medication may help you to concentrate and stay in control, you will still need to learn all about your AD/HD and learn new ways to manage study skills, time and behaviors.

What Medicines Can Do

Decrease activity level

-sit still longer

-less running

Allow child to focus longer

-do more accurate work

-improve attention

-listen to people longer

Decrease impulsivity

-follow rules better

-may think before acting

Decrease reactivity

-less aggression

What Medicines Can't Do

Teach good behavior

-remove old behaviors

-teach reflective thinking

Teach skills they missed

-teach old school work

-teach social skills

-teach what to focus on

Teach dealing with feelings

-control anger

-deal with frustration

-make a child happy

Motivate the child

-make them try new skills

Dear TLC,

My son always rushes through his homework and refuses to go back and make any corrections. How can I avoid some of these homework hassles?

Explain to your child that his homework is finished when a parent has looked over it and the child has gone back and made corrections. Children with AD/HD frequently rush through school work, focusing on getting the homework done, not getting it done correctly. If homework time is difficult for you child, here are a few tips:

1. Establish daily homework time.
2. Set up a proper study area in your home.
3. Remind your child homework is finished when it has been checked and corrected.
4. Constantly phrase your child's efforts.
5. Use additional incentives

The Learning Connections of Easton offers coaching and consulting services for AD/HD or other learning differences, as well as monthly informative sessions at the Nick Rajacich Health Education Center in the Easton Memorial Hospital. Bring your questions or concerns— we will provide information, offer resources, show videos, have lecturers and discuss tips for managing these personal and family challenges. For more information on The Learning Connections or our support, call 410-763-7097.

Send your questions to ASK TLC, P.O. Box 3293, Easton, MD 21601, and look for answers in our upcoming columns.

- *The new medically accepted terminology for attention deficit disorder, with or without hyperactivity is AD/HD. Medical information adapted from materials of Edward M. Hallowell, MD.*