

Hyperactivity

Is your child unable to sit still?



Is your child:

- Acting wound up?
- Seeming like she has ants in her pants?
- Moving constantly?
- Fidgeting more than others?
- Showing an endless supply of energy?
- Operating in only two speeds...very fast...and...asleep?
- Getting in trouble at school for not sitting still?
- Bumping into other kids?
- Making messes?
- Being loud or noisy?

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Hyperactivity is exactly what it sounds like: a condition of being unusually or abnormally active. If your child is hyperactive, he may seem like a buzzing little bee, with a constant, almost boundless supply of energy. Toys and activities may not maintain your child's interest very long. She may say, "I just need to get my energy out." Hyperactive kids can be exhausting. As a parent you may think, "We have already been swimming and to the park, and my child is still wanting to go play soccer? I'm beat!" Sometimes, parents wonder if the amount of movement and fidgeting exhibited by their children is

normal. Often in young children, parents question how their child's behavior is any different than a typical 5-year-old. Although no clear-cut answers are available to this question, hyperactivity tends to become problematic when it is 'getting in the way.' If your child is constantly in trouble for being out of her seat, displaying poor social skills due to the excessive activity level, accidentally hurting peers or breaking things often, or unable to sit still for a fifteen-minute dinner conversation, then you probably have reason to be concerned.

CLINICAL DESCRIPTION

Clinically, hyperactivity is a symptom characterized by constant moving about and excessive movement that is not appropriate to the situation. For example, it can be perfectly fine for your child to run around the park, but running around the classroom may not be acceptable. Some degree of activity is typical in young children; hyperactivity symptoms are more severe and constant. Other specific symptoms include nonstop fidgeting, running, jumping, tapping, bouncing, climbing, swinging legs, changing seated positions or squirming in seat, touching anything and everything, playing with clothes, as well as excessive talking and noise making. Very often, hyperactive children run around and climb. General loudness and inability to be quiet are symptoms of hyperactivity. These children are unable to play or engage in leisure activities quietly. They are often "on the go" and acting as if they are "driven by a motor." Hyperactive children may be unable to sit still, appear to have "ants in their pants" and cannot engage in activities without moving much more than is expected.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS HYPERACTIVE

If you are wondering about your child's levels of hyperactivity, it will be important to have an assessment. If hyperactivity is uncovered in an evaluation, it will be necessary to begin treatment as soon as possible [1,2,3]. Appropriate behavioral or motor activities need to be taught for many children who are hyperactive. Behavioral therapy can help your child with attention and focus by providing meaningful reinforcement for on-task behavior and task completion. Sometimes, a tutor or coach can help hyperactive children learn how to get started on homework and to finish assignments. Many parents are hesitant to get a diagnosis of ADHD for fear that the child will be 'medicated.' It is recommended that parents be proactive when they have concerns about their child's attention. Psychologists cannot prescribe medications, and even if your child's doctor recommends medication, you will always have the option to hold off or refuse that suggestion. Whether medication is chosen or not, hyperactive children tend to benefit from behavioral or psychological therapy.

In addition to therapy, parents can try strategies at home to help with hyperactivity. Provide multiple outlets for your child's energy. Activities like swimming, horseback riding, and gymnastics can be therapeutic for a very active child. Think carefully before taking your child to a tea party, movie theater, library, story time at the book store, or adult birthday party. Your child may not be able to maintain his or her composure in

quiet places. A list of kids' books, such as *Personal Space Camp* [5] and *Ms. Gorski, I Think I Have The Wiggle Fidgets* [6], is provided in the Learn More section below. Reading these books with your child can help 'put a name on' his or her challenges and teach him or her that many children have the same struggles [5,6,7,8,9].

SIMILAR SYMPTOMS

If your child is struggling with a similar problem, not directly addressed in this section, see the list below for links to information about other related symptom areas.

- [Attention Challenges \(Focusing\)](#): children who are hyperactive may also have difficulty with attention, which may lead to challenges remembering things like names, following directions, and completing tasks at school [1,2,3]
- [Executive Functioning Challenges \(Organizing\)](#): children who are hyperactive may also have difficulties related to planning, sequencing, and organizing information
- [Cognitive Processing Challenges \(Understanding\)](#): children who are hyperactive may have trouble with fluency in cognitive processing. A child may not encode information if he or she is a visual learner and may not be good at auditory learning
- [Impulsivity](#): children who are hyperactive may also have issues with impulsivity (acting without thinking) [7]
- [Social skills challenges \(Socializing\)](#): children who are hyperactive may have poor social skills due to excessive activity level, failure to read social cues, and the tendency to violate personal space [5]

POTENTIAL DISABILITIES

*Children who have significant problems in this area may have any of the following potential disabilities. *Note, this information does not serve as a diagnosis in any way. See the 'Where to Go for Help' section for professionals who can diagnose or provide a referral.*

- [ADHD](#): hyperactive children may have ADHD or other neurological issues [1, 2, 3]
- [Bipolar](#): hyperactivity is often present in children with mood disorders, such as Bipolar
- [Autism](#): some hyperactive children also have poor social skills and deficits in executive functions associated with autism [4]

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

If your child is struggling with this symptom to the point that it is getting in the way of his learning, relationships, or happiness, the following professionals could help; they may offer diagnosis, treatment, or both.

- [CLEAR Child Psychology](#): to obtain a *customized profile* of concerns for your child or to *consult 'live'* with a psychologist
- [Psychologist or Neuropsychologist](#): to consider an evaluation for diagnostic clarification
- [Developmental Pediatrician](#): to help guide behavioral and medical treatment. A pediatrician who specializes in children with developmental concerns and may be a helpful resource for diagnosis or treatment.
- [ABA Therapist \(Applied Behavior Analysis\)](#): to use principals of reinforcement to increase desired behaviors, like appropriate motor activities, and to decrease undesired behaviors, like excessive running at the wrong times. For older children, ABA may be a good way to address their adaptive skills weaknesses.

These professionals may recommend the following tests for this symptom:

- [TOVA](#): test of attention
- [BASC-3](#): test of behavior and emotional symptoms
- [Conners-3](#): test of attention and other symptoms of AD/HD or related disorders
- [BRIEF-2](#): test of executive functions

LEARN MORE

[1] Barkley, Russell A. (2013). *Taking charge of ADHD, 3rd edition: The complete, authoritative guide for parents.*

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Taking-Charge-ADHD-Third-Authoritative/dp/1462507891/>

[2] Zeigler Dendy, Chris A. (2011). *Teaching teens with ADD, ADHD & executive function deficits: A quick reference guide for teachers and parents.*

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Teens-Executive-Function-Deficits/dp/1606130161/>

[3] Giler, Janet Z. (2011). *Socially ADDept: Teaching social skills to children with ADHD, LD, and Asperger's.*

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Socially-ADDept-Teaching-Children-Aspergers/dp/047059683X/>

[4] Kroncke, Anna P., & Willard, Marcy & Huckabee, Helena (2016). *Assessment of autism spectrum disorder: Critical issues in clinical forensic and school settings*. Springer, San Francisco.

Springer: <http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319255026>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Assessment-Autism-Spectrum-Disorder-Psychological/dp/3319255029/>

For Kids:

[5] Cook, Julia (2012). *Personal space camp*.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Personal-Space-Camp-Julia-Cook/dp/1931636877/>

[6] Esham, Barbara (2015). *Mrs. Gorski, I think I have the wiggle fidgets. (New edition) (Adventures of everyday geniuses.)*

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Gorski-Fidgets-Adventures-Everyday-Geniuses/dp/1603368175/>

[7] Smith, Bryan & Griffen, Lisa M. (2016). *What were you thinking? Learning to control your impulses (Executive function)*.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/What-Were-You-Thinking-Learning/dp/1934490962/>

[8] Cook, Julia (2006). *My mouth is a volcano*.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/My-Mouth-Volcano-Julia-Cook/dp/1931636850/>

[9] Stein, David Ezra (2011). *Interrupting chicken*.

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Interrupting-Chicken-David-Ezra-Stein/dp/0763689033/>

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Attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-in-child

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