Safe kids @ Healthy kids @ Happy kids

Is It Normal Toddler Behavior or ADHD?

Typical toddler behavior frustrates many parents. All kids have times when they have trouble listening and following instructions. Are these behaviors normal or a sign of ADHD?

ADHD affects how a child's brain:

- Processes information,
- Organizes information, and
- Manages impulses. It is the most commonly diagnosed behavioral disorder in kids. Most toddlers show signs of ADHD some of the time. In recent years, doctors have diagnosed a sharply increased number of kids.



How do doctors assess a child? They look for symptoms that last for at least 6 months. Do these symptoms affect a child's social abilities? Do they create a problem for the child? Are they present in the home, at daycare, at play? Experts look at three groups of ADHD symptoms:

- 1. Inattention. Your child:
 - Cannot focus on a story or game.
 - Is unable to follow simple directions.
 - Appears not to listen when someone speaks.
 - Is easily distracted.
- 2. **Hyperactivity.** Your child:
 - Is always talking.
 - Squirms all the time.

- Has a quick temper.
- Runs and moves so quickly, he gets hurt often.
- 3. **Impulsivity.** Your child:
 - Cannot play peacefully with other kids.
 - Interrupts others.
 - Has angry outbursts.
 - Is moody and overreacts.

Parents should start watching their child for ADHD during the toddler years. If untreated, negative behavior can have a negative effect on learning and success in school. It can also keep a child from making friends.

If you see these signs in your toddler:

- Seek help right away. Do not wait.
- Call your doctor to rule out a medical problem.
- Consult a child psychiatrist or psychologist for an accurate diagnosis.
- Ask yourelf if a major life event has affected your child's behavior.

Bad parenting does not cause ADHD. However, positive parenting techniques can help correct bad behavior. All children – whether they do or do not have ADHD - need positive social skills. It is every parent's job to teach these skills with love, consistency and patience.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital



