

The following article was published in *The Charlotte Observer* on July 12, 2004

By Kenneth T. Ashkin, MD
Mecklenburg Neurological Associates

Question:

My 10-year-old has a hard time in school. He often talks out of turn and then gets in trouble with the teacher. He has been diagnosed with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Will these symptoms continue throughout his life?

Answer:

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a common brain disorder that affects up to 12 percent of children. Children with ADHD have difficulty paying attention, sitting still or controlling their impulses. The symptoms can start before age 7 and be severe enough to affect the child's ability to learn in school and get along with others. The disorder often runs in families and is thought to be due to a chemical imbalance in the brain. There are three forms of ADHD: Inattentive only, hyperactive/impulsive type or a combined type. Treatment often involves behavioral therapy in combination with medication.

Is it possible for him to outgrow this condition?

Unfortunately, it is rare for one to outgrow this disorder. Up to two-thirds of children with ADHD continue to suffer with the disorder into adulthood. It is estimated that as many as 8 million U.S. adults have the disorder. Up to two-thirds of children with ADHD continue to suffer with the disorder into adulthood. It is estimated that as many as 8 million U.S. adults have the disorder. Many were not diagnosed in childhood. Adult ADHD symptoms include difficulty focusing on, organizing and completing tasks. Impulsiveness, rapid speech, irritability and sleep disturbances are common. These individuals may have difficulty keeping a job or maintaining a household. Relationships with others can be difficult. Anxiety, depression and substance abuse can also occur more commonly. Diagnosis of the disorder in adulthood can be difficult, but is certainly worthwhile.

Is treatment available for adults with ADHD?

Yes, treatment can dramatically improve quality of life for patients as well as for those around them. Supportive counseling, often in conjunction with medication, can be quite effective. Both stimulant and non-stimulant type medications are available.

For more information, start by seeing your doctor.