

Deciding to have a school assessment and evaluation for ADHD

After developing awareness and concern about your child's problem, you may be considering getting a professional evaluation.

Many parents reach the point when they have exhausted their ability to solve the problem at home, and there are ongoing concerns and frustrations by the teacher about the issues at school.

You may feel overwhelmed in taking this step. You may have thought that the problem would resolve itself.

When should you decide to get an assessment?

Many parents have noted a problem right from the preschool years that their child is having difficulties compared to other children for the same age.

Early symptoms may include excessive activity, lack of concentration and control over the emotional state, aggressive behaviour, excitability that have become difficult to ignore.

You may think that none of these interventions has tried various behaviour interventions suggested by the teacher have made significant inroads into dealing with a problem or receiving help from a psychologist, occupational therapist, or behaviour therapist. You have realised that the current strategies will not solve the problem without further understanding and planning.

It is after these two factors, and parents realise there's something wrong that needs help.

School staff members may have pointed out concerns about your child's behaviour and learning.

If the problems are more severe, parents become aware that their child behaves differently and has disruptive behaviour at the preschool level.

Unfortunately, staff members at schools do not mention anything to parents and parents; this causes a delay in parents seeking help.

Sometimes teachers refer children to occupational therapists when this is not the most appropriate starting point to seek help. Teachers think that the parents will feel less threatened if they are referred to as an occupational therapist rather than seek help from a behaviour specialist or psychologist. The referral to an occupational therapist may cause lengthy delays and unnecessary therapy expenditure before children are diagnosed with ADHD. In my opinion, teachers are worried about the parents' reaction to a more appropriate referral such as a paediatrician or psychologist.

Most parents only learn that there is a problem with their child after one or two years at formal school once the demands of multitasking and socialising have increased.

In a formal school setting in grades 0-3, children must sit for more extended periods without fidgeting, listen to a teacher for long periods and carry out instructions. These demands unmask behaviour concentration and learning problems.

The differences in age-appropriate self-regulation become apparent.

Only in a small but significant minority of cases, parents only see professional help after several years at school.

The trigger for seeking help can be online media articles related to schooling problems and reports by other parents of similar school problems.

Parents mainly ask teachers or other parents for a referral to an expert who manages schooling problems and concentration problems. There may not be an understanding at this point of ADHD.

An online search for information can be confusing and misleading, almost like walking through a Turkish Bazaar, not knowing a legitimate information source.

By Googling ADHD parents name, read and see unreliable sources of information stating many minutes, thereby creating many misperceptions surrounding ADHD.

There can be misleading sources of information that make parents go in the wrong direction.

In my experience, parents start buying food elimination diets, eliminating sugar, particularly food preservatives and gluten. These eliminations can potentially cause nutritional deficiencies.

Some parents spend enormous amounts of money on supplements and alternative food therapies.

Some of these therapies have no legitimate scientific foundation.

1 Testing the pH of the blood.

2 looking for candida in the blood as a cause of ADHD.

Three expensive allergy testing by a legitimate organisation preying on the paranoia and fear of parents.

4. some doctors feed this paranoia by performing unnecessary tests such as thyroid tests and electroencephalogram(EEG).

Some parents believe the popular misperceptions and myths are cutting down on screen time, stricter discipline or solve the problems.

All these therapies are doomed to fail because ADHD is a biochemical problem.

Parents can count themselves fortunate if they find a preschool or primary school teacher that recognises the signs of ADHD.

In my experience, the teacher recognises the symptoms and suggests further evaluation rather than family doctors that recognise the symptoms of ADHD.

Only too often, I find a child is only referred to my practice after seeking help from several family doctors and one to two years of occupational therapy or behaviour therapy. Parents have become frustrated and have lost faith in the medications because of simple prescription habits by doctors.

If you are concerned and suspect that your child has a concentration, behaviour or learning problem or could have ADHD, don't ignore it, hoping that it will go away. Consider the following as warning signs in indication for an assessment.

1. Your child has shown for at least six months problems with concentration and impulsivity that is far greater and other children for the same age.
2. For the past few months, other parents or teachers have been telling you that your child has low self-control, is very busy, impulsive, inattentive and has poor self-regulation compared to other children.
3. a lot of your time is spent trying to keep your child safe and out of trouble compared to other parents
4. other children do not like to play with your child and avoid your child because of excessive activity, impulsivity, emotional or aggressive behaviour.
5. A staff member at school or preschool has told you that your child has had significant behaviour problems for several months.
6. You Are starting to lose your temper with your child; you are beginning to think about excessive physical discipline or even harm to your child; you are feeling tired, exhausted or even depressed as a result of managing and raising your child

What type of professional should you call to get help?

You need to think about who is the best qualified and experienced doctor or psychologist, or mental health professional in your area. Every child suspected of having ADHD needs a thorough neurological assessment to exclude more common and other rare disorders that can aggravate or mimic ADHD. Conditions such as epilepsy, inheritance syndromes, tic disorders. Allergies and allergic fatigue syndrome.

If a psychologist has diagnosed you, you will need to see a paediatrician immediately to exclude medical problems. The paediatrician may need to do their assessment as a paediatrician is a doctor that will be prescribing the medications and taking responsibility for your child's medical treatment.

Unfortunately, parents that psychologists have seen are asked to tell their GP to prescribe a particular medication on a psychologist's instructions; this is inappropriate and unethical. Try to find a doctor who can take you through the whole process without first seeing a psychologist and medical expert.

Of course, some excellent psychologists can make a diagnosis and make an appropriate referral to a qualified ADHD expert.

Not all paediatricians, general practitioners or psychologists have the training and interest in ADHD.

A good source of information and referral source is your child's school; they will be aware that doctors specialise in ADHD, learning problems, and emotional issues.

Psychologists and other therapists or counsellors

Educational Psychologists are trained to evaluate psychological problems in children and can give psychological, learning and behavioural advice.

Before you choose a professional to perform the assessment:

does the doctor see children with ADHD frequently? Does he or she spend most of their time assessing children with behavioural, emotional, educational and ADHD problems? Does the doctor keep up to date And provide additional services such as support services. Does the doctor Provide other support services?

Don't be afraid and embarrassed to ask as you have your child's best interests at heart.

You're in medical insurance or medical aid.

Most medical AIDs do not view ADHD as a chronic condition and, therefore, will only pay for consultations and medications from the out of hospital funds. Medical AIDs such as Discovery medical aid and momentum medical aid does not pay for medications as a chronically prescribed minimum benefit. Some of the smaller medical to pay for the medication as a PMB.

There is a legitimate tax deduction for the expenses incurred in assessing and treating ADHD. These SARS forms need to be completed by a specialist and can provide a rebate.

Teachers and staff at your child's school.

Your child's school can be an essential source of help. Some schools provide a free educational assessment forming part of your school fees. Ask the school if the evaluation is required and covered by the school fees.

One of the essential reasons to get an assessment is for your child to attend a remedial or special support class within the current school. The review will form part of the prerequisite application for placement.

Advice for an effective school assessment

What can you do to make the assessment more affective and helpful

Request from your doctor or psychologist an assessment pack or documents to prepare for the assessment

Speak to your teacher about the concerns regarding your child's performance and take some notes

if your child is applying for placement in a special school or remedial school there will be a case conference to discuss all aspects about your child be prepared to attend a group discussion. it is best to prepare by making notes and jotting down your concerns

always be cooperative and courteous and be as diplomatic as possible you will get a lot more done and get a lot more help if you approach the process with this attitude bring any concerns to the attention of the school administrators are having an open discussion in which you are able to articulate in a succinct way your concerns
if you are unhappy with the outcome of the application to the remedial unit make sure that you get in writing the reasons that your child was denied placement this can form part of and re-application if a place is available in another remedial school
preparation for the school assessment

It is preferable the children I saw initially by a specialist who sees children every day.

Find a physician who knows ADHD and has extensive experience prescribing medications, managing complications of medications, able to interact with teachers psychologist and therapist. Has a deep understanding of all the associated conditions and learning problems with ADHD.

Very few general Practitioners, paediatricians or even child neurologists spend a large proportion of the time dealing with ADHD.

One of the best referral sources is a school and teacher who will know which doctors specialize in the area of ADHD.

Psychologists and other therapist or counsellors

Psychologists are trained early to say psychological problems, learning problems.

It is not always necessary to be assessed by a psychologist unless there is a high suspicion of learning difficulties.