

Childhood ADHD can be Managed with Medication

Early treatment reduces effects that can continue into adulthood

Media attention to ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, has raised awareness of the condition, but may leave questions about recognizing and treating the disorder.

K. Scott Pacer, M.D., a child and adolescent psychiatrist and Children's Medical Director at Coleman Behavioral Health, tells parents that children should display at least six out of nine inattentive symptoms and nine hyperactive-impulsive symptoms recognized by professionals before being evaluated for ADHD.

Behaviors include difficulties paying attention to tasks, following instructions, organizing tasks, and being easily distracted. Over six months, the child should have six or more criteria, and the behaviors should be present in more than one setting like school or home. Parents should also see evidence that it's causing impairment in the child's social, academic or occupational functioning.

Once a child is diagnosed, therapy or medication may be recommended. According to Dr. Pacer, medical treatments are highly recommended, safe and effective for children when used properly.

"You want to treat the ADHD," he said. "By treating ADHD at younger ages you will avoid drug and alcohol abuse, have less trouble with the law, less teenage pregnancies and lessen the likelihood the child will have some type of accident."

Whether or not parents decide to medicate their children diagnosed with ADHD, they should know that it can continue into adulthood. "Some do get better with age, but it's the inattentiveness that can be very hampering for high school students and adults," he said. Early treatment is key to helping ADHD children to become successful adults.