

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

ADHD: Getting A Thorough, Definitive Diagnosis

(NAPSA)—For parents who suspect their child may have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a thorough, professional evaluation should be the first step toward addressing the problem.

“Although ADHD is the most common psychiatric condition in children, affecting three to five percent of school-aged children, there is no simple test for the disorder,” says Dr. David G. Fassler, clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Vermont, Burlington. “An accurate diagnosis depends on a comprehensive evaluation.”

Among the symptoms that doctors look for are: trouble paying attention, being easily distracted, frequently losing things, making careless mistakes or forgetting to turn in homework. Children with ADHD often have trouble listening, following instructions or finishing work.

“Any of these symptoms by themselves may be perfectly normal,” says Dr. Fassler. “What we look for is a constellation of symptoms that interferes with the child’s ability to function. It’s important to put the effort up front and get the diagnosis right because we really can help most of these kids.”

Pediatricians, clinical and educational psychologists and even neurologists are likely to be involved in the original diagnosis.

“ADHD is a real illness, but the good news is that it is treatable,” Dr. Fassler said. “Treatment often includes medication, but medication alone is rarely an adequate or ideal intervention. Even if the condition is purely biological, by the time most children get help, there are secondary issues—self-



Treating ADHD in childhood can help prevent it from becoming a problem in adulthood.

esteem issues, school issues and problems in the family. They need help working these issues through to minimize lasting effects.”

Meanwhile, more and more adults are seeking help for problems that look very much like adult versions of ADHD. And a significant number of children with ADHD continue to meet the psychiatric criteria for the condition as adults, according to Rafael Klorman, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Director of Clinical Training, University of Rochester, N.Y. It is currently estimated that as many as 50 to 60 percent of children with ADHD continue to deal with aspects of the disorder into adulthood.

Eight million adult Americans are estimated to struggle with the inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity of ADHD. The adult form of the condition is considered a highly disabling disorder with a significant effect on a broad range of areas of functioning, including education and employment.

According to Harvard researcher

Joseph Biederman, yearly household income losses due to ADHD within the U.S. are approximately \$77 billion. “On average,” he explains, “those with ADHD have household incomes that are about \$10,791 lower for high school graduates and \$4,334 lower for college graduates, compared to those who do not have ADHD.”

In a recent study, 500 adults who had been diagnosed with ADHD were matched for age and gender with 501 adults in the general population. In a telephone interview, all the participants were asked questions about school performance, substance abuse, driving records, use of tobacco, problems in the workplace, marital problems and problems with other relationships, their satisfaction with key aspects of their lives and their general outlook on life.

“We saw that adults with ADHD had significant difficulties in the quality of their lives,” says Dr. Biederman. “They had higher divorce rates. Substance abuse was more common. They reported a much lower level of satisfaction with all aspects of their lives.”

This information was recently delivered at an American Medical Association media briefing on ADHD. In addition to the announcement of survey data, many topics on ADHD were discussed, including treatment, living with the disorder and behavioral and psychosocial intervention.

There are many reliable resources available for people who have ADHD, as well as those who have a loved one with ADHD. For additional information and support, visit the Web site at www.ADHDsupportcompany.com.