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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition characterised by either inattention, hyperactivity or a combination of the two. Even though children are generally born with the condition after inheriting it from their parents, it can also be acquired after birth. ADHD affects both children and adults. It is the most common psychiatric condition in children and is more common in boys.


### Treatment:



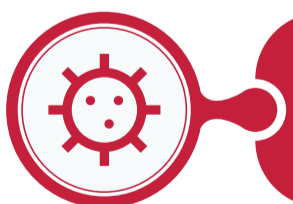
Sustained team effort and support from parents, caregivers, friends, teachers, employers and medical mental health professionals




The choice of treatment should be directed towards the predominant type of ADHD the individual has.



Behavioural therapy is often accompanied by medication. Stimulants have been shown to be effective.



Parents and caregivers hope for therapies that do not involve medications for children, but evidence to date has shown that symptoms of ADHD are poorly treated without drugs.



Changing diet



## Questions

for Dr Thapelo Motshudi

### 1 What are the symptoms?

Diagnosis is usually made from the age of 5 - 7 years. Some of the symptoms include the following:

- Often makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities
- Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
- Often does not seem to listen to what is being said
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores or duties in the workplace
- Often avoids or strongly dislikes tasks (such as schoolwork or homework) that require sustained mental effort
- Often is easily distracted and often forgetful in daily activities
- Abnormal fidgeting by tapping hands feet or squirming in a seat
- Leaving seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected
- Running about or climbing excessively in situations where this behaviour is inappropriate
- Difficulty playing or doing activities quietly
- Unable to be or uncomfortable being still for extended periods of time
- Difficulty waiting in lines or awaiting turn in games or group situations
- Sensitivity to bright light
- Highly emotional
- Talks excessively.

### 2 Diagnosis:

Diagnosis is based on examination by a health professional. Currently there are no known blood tests available for diagnosis and brain scans do not show any specific findings. In some circumstances an EEG is performed, especially when there is suspicion of a seizure disorder. These symptoms should not start later than 12 years of age and they should be present in 2 or more situations, such as school, work or home. In addition, the condition should cause significant disruption of social, academic or work functioning and it should be noted that all the listed symptoms should not just be seen to occur when the individual is intoxicated, or when there is another known mental condition like anxiety.

### 3 Where can I find help if you suspect your child has ADHD?

- Alert your local health professional, who will then initiate appropriate testing by the relevant specialists.
- Communicate with the child's teachers.
- A valuable resource is the Attention deficit And Hyperactivity Disorder Support Group of Southern Africa (ADHASA).