

# NIMH Research on Treatment for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): The Multimodal Treatment Study - Questions and Answers

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/childhp/mtaqa.cfm>

What is the best kind of help we can offer children with ADHD over a longer term?

*The Multimodal Treatment Study of Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*

Up-to-date information concerning the long-term safety and comparative effectiveness of its treatments is urgently needed...The MTA study demonstrates for the first time the safety and relative effectiveness of these two treatments (including a behavioral therapy-only group), alone and in combination, for a time period up to 14 months, and compares these treatments to routine community care. The children involved in the study will be tracked into adolescence to document and evaluate long-term outcomes.

...long-term combination treatments as well as medication-management alone are both significantly superior to intensive behavioral treatments and routine community treatments in reducing ADHD symptoms...these differential benefits extend as long as 14 months.

What the MTA study has demonstrated is that on average, carefully monitored medication management with monthly follow-up is more effective than intensive behavioral treatment for ADHD symptoms, for periods lasting as long as 14 months. All children tended to improve over the course of the study, but they differed in the relative amount of improvement, with the carefully done medication management approaches generally showing the greatest improvement.

...Therefore, medication alone is not necessarily the best treatment for every child, and families often need to pursue other treatments, either alone or in combination with medication.

...the MTA study findings suggest that many children can often acquire these abilities when given the opportunity. Children treated with effective medication management... manifested substantially greater improvements in social skills and peer relations than children in the community comparison group after 14 months. This important finding indicates that symptoms of ADHD may interfere with their learning of specific social skills.