

# Positive emotional attention bias in young children with symptoms of ADHD.

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## Abstract

Children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often experience emotional dysregulation. Dysregulation can arise from heightened attention to emotional stimuli. Emotional attention biases are associated with a number of adverse socioemotional outcomes including reward sensitivity and externalizing behaviors. As reward sensitivity and externalizing behaviors are common in children with ADHD, the aim of the current study was to determine whether emotional attention biases are evident in young children with clinically significant ADHD symptoms. To test this, children with ( $n = 18$ ) and without ( $n = 15$ ) symptoms of ADHD were tested on a Dot Probe task. Provided recent evidence that emotional attention biases are attenuated by sleep, the task was performed before and after overnight sleep. Children with ADHD symptoms displayed positive, but not negative, attention biases at both time points, whereas typically developing children did not preferentially attend toward or away from positive or negative stimuli. Sleep did not alter attention biases in either group. Collectively, these results indicate that children with ADHD symptoms have stable, positive attention biases.