

## Are fidget spinners really helpful?

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Madam, the fidget spinners are devices/toys that have gained a lot of popularity recently amongst people of different age groups, especially school going children. They are believed to be good for conditions like ADHD and autism due to their fidgeting property.<sup>1-4</sup> An attribute which has been noted to dispel nervous energy or psychological stress, since fidgeting with an object in the hand has been proven to be helpful in retaining and contributing to an individual's attention while carrying out a long task. However, there has not yet been a definitive study regarding the impact of these toys in the research world.

Fidget toys have been available for kids for quite some time. Some experts do believe that fidget items can provide brain stimulation to the children, in order to counteract hyperactivity in the classroom, while other experts are of the view that these spinners might be a harmful distraction.<sup>2</sup> "Things that are routine or have some demand, it's much harder for children with ADHD to be able to pay attention. And so, [the spinner] may well make things worse for them," said Dr. Mark Wolraich, a behavioral pediatrician at Oklahoma University Health Sciences Center.<sup>3</sup>

The fidget spinners are visually distracting for the user as well as the surrounding people, since hand-eye coordination is required to rotate and balance it on the thumb. Therefore, limiting its use by the ADHD affected students in the classrooms. This drives our attention to other fidget toys which serve the same purpose but are less distracting and more classroom-friendly. These include fidget cubes, stress balls and other therapeutic fidget items that don't have this visual attention problem.

A 2015 study published in the Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology stated that those who participated in gross motor activity performed better than those who sat still during tasks involving working memory.<sup>5</sup> Gross body

movements increases activity in the frontal and the prefrontal areas of the brain that helps sustain attention. But the fidget spinners do not involve gross body movements which is why the question arises if they are really helpful for therapeutic purposes?

Incidence regarding kids choking on some of the spinner's small parts have been recently reported.<sup>4,5</sup> Consumer Product Safety Commission should look into the hazards of children choking on parts that pop out of a fidget spinner. Neither peer reviewed studies nor scientific evidences prove the therapeutic evidences of fidget spinners up to date. Fidgeting behavior and objects should be studied in detail by the researchers in order to provide enough evidences regarding its therapeutic usage.

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