

A GUIDE
FOR PARENTS

A guide to ADHD for parents and families



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A way forward

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How this booklet can help

This booklet has been given to you because your child has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). If this is the first time you have come across this condition, or even if your child has had symptoms for a while, finding out your child has a learning or behavioural challenge can be a worrying time for you and your family.

However, ADHD has been known about for many years and is more common than you might think - which means there is lots of information available and many children and their families have found ways of coping with ADHD.

‘A guide to ADHD - for parents and families’

- was originally published in January 2009 and based on the combined experience of four experts who have been helping children and their families over many years;

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These experts have written widely on ADHD and the information which follows has been put together to help answer some of the questions you might have and explain how everyone involved may be feeling - not just your child, but brothers and sisters and you, the parents or carers. You'll also find advice on how to approach ADHD and how to improve your child's behaviour and skills.

We have recently updated the information to make sure it is in line with the most current thinking and practices. Of course, the team who are managing your child will know what's best in your individual circumstances, but we hope the information which follows will help in that process.

Dr Val Harpin

Consultant Paediatrician

About ADHD

ADHD - or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder to give it its full name - is a medical term. It is used to describe a condition where children are impulsive, hyperactive and find it hard to pay attention.

It can often lead to problems in learning and behaviour.

“Everyone tells me my child is just badly behaved but I know there’s a problem.”

Christine, mother of Matt

ADHD affects children and teenagers in different ways and to different degrees. Management of ADHD will vary according to the child but usually involves a range of approaches to help behaviour and learning. These are mainly aimed at the child but can involve parents, carers and teachers. Sometimes medication is given - some of these medications have been used in the treatment of ADHD for many years. However, medication is not recommended until children are at school.

How common is ADHD?

ADHD is quite common in the UK - affecting around 5% of children (1 in 20) in every school class but not all will require treatment. Boys are four times more likely to have the condition than girls.



What are the symptoms?

ADHD can take different forms in different children but there are three common themes, any of which you may recognise in your child.

Inattention

- Difficulty following instructions or completing tasks
- Short attention span and difficulty 'sticking to' an activity
- Difficulty organising tasks and activities
- Easily distracted and forgetful
- Often doesn't listen when spoken to

Hyperactivity

- Fidgets, is restless and constantly moves about (as if 'driven by a motor') and can't sit still in class
- Can't stop talking, noisy
- Runs about when it is inappropriate

Impulsiveness

Children with ADHD can act before thinking - sometimes this behaviour can seem reckless to others.

- Interrupts others
- Blurts out answers without waiting for the question to be finished
- Difficulty in waiting or taking turns

It is important to recognise that not all children with ADHD have all the symptoms. There are three types of ADHD according to DSM IV classification.

The 3 types of ADHD

1. ADHD (Inattentive Type) is a term used to describe children who mainly have problems with concentration and attention span but who are not usually impulsive or overactive.
2. ADHD (Hyperactive/impulsive type) describes children who predominantly have problems with overactive and impulsive behaviour.
3. ADHD (Combined Type) as the name suggests combines symptoms from the ADHD Hyperactive/impulsive and ADHD Inattentive Type and is the most severe form of the condition.

The term 'Hyperkinetic Disorder' is used to describe children with most severe ADHD, who have significant problems in all the core features:

- Hyperactivity
- Impulsiveness
- Inattention

resulting in serious disruption to the child's life both at home and school.

Is it definitely ADHD?

It is not always easy to diagnose ADHD. There isn't one simple test which will confirm that a child has ADHD and there is a process to go through before it is agreed that your child has ADHD.

This process will involve specialist doctors who are trained in children's conditions and they may work in a paediatric department or a child psychiatry department.

In order to be sure it is ADHD, there will be a thorough assessment of your child with discussions about behaviour and learning in different settings.

A 'history' will need to be taken, what has happened in the past and sometimes other people (such as teachers) will be asked to comment. Once the doctors are sure it is ADHD, there will be lots of other professionals who work in education and in the community who will help you and your child.

How is ADHD diagnosed?

From the doctor's point of view, the diagnosis of ADHD can only be confirmed upon meeting specific criteria (ICD10 / DSM IV)*.

In addition the ADHD symptoms must have been

- Present before the age of 7 years
- For the duration of at least 6 months
- Occurring in more than one place (for example both at home and school)
- Not appropriate to the child's developmental age
- Must be seriously disruptive to the child's performance

*The doctors use criteria which are known as ICD10 or DSM IV (The reference for them is International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders 10th edition, 1993 and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition American Psychiatric Press 1994).



"I do things I don't mean to do... and it makes me stick out."

Jacob, 9

What problems can ADHD cause?

The challenges facing children with ADHD will vary from child to child. It can go beyond simply being naughty and restless and can affect other aspects of their life. These are some of the kinds of problems that others have reported:

Some reported problems:

- not doing well at school
- low self esteem
- not doing as they are told
- poor sleeping
- being aggressive
- throwing tantrums
- difficulties with reading

All of this can make being a Mum, Dad or carer even more challenging and put pressure on the family.

You may find you need support. Those who help your child will be able to help you too - so don't be afraid to ask!

**"I make friends then
I break up with them easily.
I keep getting into fights
with them, sometimes
because of my ADHD"**

Antonio, 13 years old with ADHD
and Oppositional behaviour

Are there any problems overlapping with ADHD?

ADHD affects children and adolescents in different ways and can often exist with other conditions. Children with ADHD often have other problems. Conditions which can co-exist or overlap with ADHD:

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder
(the child is often defiant, oppositional, argumentative, angry, losing temper etc)
- Conduct Disorder (there are problems such as persistent and repetitive lying, stealing, truancy, bullying, vandalism, setting fire etc)
- Learning Disorders
- Developmental Co-ordination Disorder
(co-ordination difficulties)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder/Asperger's syndrome (social and communication difficulties)
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Tic Disorders (Tics are involuntary movement of muscles)
- Tourette's Syndrome
(the person has tics, involuntary and uncontrollable movements and sounds)
- Sleep Problems

What causes ADHD?

ADHD is a well recognised behavioural disorder that could result from a number of risk factors. ADHD tends to run in families and there is an increased frequency of ADHD in relatives of children with ADHD. It is often inherited and genetic factors are important in the cause for the majority of children with ADHD.

There is a chemical imbalance with certain natural chemicals (chemical messengers called dopamine and noradrenaline) in the front part of the brain of children with ADHD being reduced.

Other risk factors include low birth weight, smoking or drinking alcohol during pregnancy, brain injury and brain diseases.

How do children with ADHD develop?

Some children with ADHD can be very bright, but often these children will not do as well at school as their classmates. As children grow up, their symptoms may change. Their hyperactivity may be replaced by inner restlessness when they become teenagers. For some, the symptoms of ADHD can carry on into adulthood.

There will be challenges along the way. For example, children with ADHD can be more likely to smoke or try drugs and alcohol. But getting the right treatment makes a big difference and can improve performance at school. There are many examples of people who have had symptoms of ADHD who have gone on to be successful and even household names.

“We all want to help him reach his potential.”

Phillipa, mother of Simon



Children with ADHD can:

- be clumsy
- have problems making friends
- answer back
- have excess energy or be very active
- be seen as 'different' or 'difficult'
- disrupt family life
- be left out of group activities

How may the family feel?

When a child has ADHD it affects the whole family. It's confusing for the child, stressful for the parents and difficult for brothers and sisters. We'll share other people's experiences and offer you some tips for feeling less alone.



How may a child with ADHD feel?

**"I get picked on every day.
I just get treated weird,
like an alien."**

Jack, 8

Picture this:

The brain of a child with ADHD is like a TV set that isn't receiving a perfect signal. For the child it's as if the channel keeps changing, too. Imagine you are watching the news on BBC1. Suddenly, somebody picks up the remote control and flicks over to ITV. A second later the programme changes to Channel 4 and then back to BBC1. Then it switches to BBC2. If you were asked about the news on BBC1, you might find it hard to remember.

For a child with ADHD the world is a constant stream of changing images and messages. It's difficult to focus on any one thing at a time because something new is always coming along. It's all rather bewildering and it's hard to keep pace.

Living with children who have ADHD

Frequently Asked Questions

It's an alien universe

From the child's point of view, nobody seems to understand:

- Adults are always annoyed because you've forgotten something or done something silly. They spend ages telling you off and making you feel stupid
- It's hard making and keeping friends. At school other kids wind you up because you're different
- You seem to get the blame for everything. It's pretty miserable and unfair
- If you had something wrong that people could see, they'd understand, but as they can't see that your brain isn't receiving a perfect signal, you don't get any sympathy at all



How can parents feel?

It's often an ordeal being the parent or carer of a child with ADHD. It can be exhausting, frustrating, embarrassing and depressing. Remember that you are not alone and what you are feeling is normal.

Below are some very common feelings experienced by people who are, like you, parents of children with ADHD. You'll probably recognize a few shared emotions.

Some parents of children with ADHD feel they are being blamed by others for poor parenting; some blame themselves. Many feel angry and disappointed and always on edge, because they never know what's going to happen next.

Many dread going to school in case there's been some incident involving their child; and worry themselves silly when their child is out of sight, and of course, they look at other people and wonder why their children are always so perfect.

"He's never invited to parties; it breaks my heart."

Christine, mother of Joe

Pages 11-25 contain advice about how to manage ADHD-talk to your child's doctor to see which techniques might work best for you.

How can you feel more in control/ manage?

It's not your fault that your child has ADHD. But it's not your child's fault either. Looking to find someone to blame is not helpful.

But it's crucial to recognise and accept that children with ADHD are different. So, you have to manage them in a slightly different way. Key to this is:

Management of children with ADHD:

Structure	– a clear pattern of how things are done
Consistency	– keeping information and expectations the same over time
Routines	– regular sequence of activities
Rituals	– doing things in the same way each time
Rules	– standards and guidelines clearly laid out
Rapport	– relationship and understanding between you and the child

- Try to keep the home as calm and happy as possible – as you know, children with ADHD can be distracted by almost everything
- If there are other relationship problems at home, try to keep them away from your child wherever possible
- Often, of course, your child is the source of the problem. If you've been trying 'iron discipline', it's time to change direction
- Focus on major misbehaviour and let the petty things pass
- With constant reprimanding, there's a big danger that children may grow to feel unloved and unaccepted. You will all find it easier if you draw up a new set of rules so that you all know where you stand
- Your child will come to recognise the rules and live by them



How can brothers and sisters feel?

For the brothers and sisters of children with ADHD, life is rarely easy. They suffer constant interruptions and teasing which can create friction. They probably feel that their brother or sister seems to hijack everything, from doing homework to watching TV or playing with friends. They may resent the fact that the child with ADHD gets much more time and attention from their parents and seems to get away with all sorts of things for which they would be punished.

Having a brother or sister with ADHD can be embarrassing at school. It can be difficult if teachers or other pupils keep on complaining about his or her inappropriate behaviour. Life for older children studying for exams can be tough, it can be particularly annoying and frustrating being interrupted while trying to study.

How can you support brothers and sisters?

Brothers and sisters need to know that their sibling with ADHD can be fun to live with but has difficulty controlling his or her behaviour; and because of this, the whole family needs to make allowances.

Some new rules may protect brothers and sisters. They can also help children with ADHD to help themselves by setting boundaries.

- Set restrictions on whether your child can enter his or her brothers' and sisters' rooms
- Lay down rules about playing with other children's toys
- Be specific and name items that are out of bounds
- To compensate for the extra time you spend on your child with ADHD, you, your partner and other relatives should try to spend some quality time with the other children individually
- Write down the house rules and put a copy of them where everyone can see them, for example, on the fridge



How can you approach ADHD and typical problems?

You need to set reasonable and consistent rules. Be firm but fair.

Inevitably, there will be times when your child behaves badly, does things wrong, forgets things and drives you to despair. Be proactive not reactive. Try to think ahead rather than waiting until things go wrong. After all, always remember it's the inappropriate behaviour you dislike, not your child.

Be practical:

You may find certain things always cause problems. Maybe your child creates havoc when you go shopping after school. If shopping is a problem, see if you can shop at a time when the child is at school or shop on the internet.

Set some key rules

Like all children, children with ADHD need boundaries - to know where they stand and how far they can go. They need structure, routines, rules and rituals.

Draw these rules up before there's trouble. Parent(s) and/or carers should sit down with the child and agree key rules.

Set some key rules over which there is little or no compromise. Be firm about these rules, but more flexible over smaller issues. 'No compromise' areas could include hitting, biting, slapping or any other aggressive behaviour. Areas where you might be more flexible could include calling out or knocking things over.

Choices and consequences

Explain to your child clearly what will happen if he or she misbehaves and breaks the rules.

Create a sense of belonging

It's easy for a child with ADHD to feel like an outcast if they are always being told off. Remember, children with ADHD have fragile self-esteem, so continue to let them know how much you love them and they are an important part of the family.

It can be helpful if someone in the extended family can act as a real friend and confidante. Often a grandparent, aunt or uncle can be an ideal choice.

How can you deal with constant interrupting?

Children with ADHD are easily bored and highly impulsive. Often, when they want to say something, they have to tell you immediately. In these situations be firm but fair; for example, say: “Robin, I’m speaking to Laura now, and it will be your turn next.”

Children with ADHD have difficulty waiting, so if the interruption continues, ask the child to tell you in two or three words what they want to talk about. It’s good to get them thinking in terms of key words or headlines. Then, when you’ve finished your conversation, you can remind them of what they wanted to tell you.

How can you deal with trouble during meals?

Make discipline at mealtimes one of your key rules. Let your child know that rudeness and bad behaviour is not acceptable. Practice ‘rituals’ in how to start, how to enjoy and how to finish mealtimes. Set simple rules such as no-one starts until everyone has been served.

How can you deal with rude comments?

Children with ADHD may make rude, offensive or silly comments. Children tend to copy adults so they will use the language you use. Make it clear that rude remarks are not acceptable at any time.

How can you deal with social awkwardness?

Sometimes children with ADHD can find social settings most difficult. They may seem rude, interrupt and be tactless. If they’ve upset somebody, take them to one side, explain what they have done (don’t ask why). When your child behaves well socially, remember your praise is worth a great deal.



What is a good way to cope with long journeys?

Travelling can be difficult. Before you set out, draw up some rules. Explain where you're going and how you are getting there. Try to include some stops along the way. Use a reward system for good behaviour. Every 10 minutes without trouble wins a point that can be used towards a special treat. Provide entertainment such as music, portable DVD or pocket games.

How can you stop your child breaking other people's property?

If you have other children, make it a rule that their property is strictly out of bounds to the child with ADHD. If things still get broken, consider making a small deduction from your child's pocket money. Praise your child when respect is shown for other people's property.

How can you deal with tantrums?

Children with ADHD can have an explosive temperament. When things go wrong they may feel very frustrated and take it out on the people and things dearest to them. Favourite toys may get smashed and when the rage subsides they feel even more cross with themselves.

Tantrums are likely to happen and over time come to recognize the phases:

- rumble (before it happens)
- rage
- recovery (when the child calms down)
- repair (a chance to talk)

Try not to criticise or remind them of what they've done. And once you have given a punishment, move on.

How can you get your child to school on time?

In the morning it can be difficult to get your child prepared to go to school on time. As a result the following suggestions may be useful.

- Set alarms at least 15 minutes before the child needs to get up
- Have bag packed the night before with books and materials
- Make sure clothes and shoes are laid out also the night before
- Have specific rituals regarding breakfast, dressing, cleaning teeth etc...
- Leave the house 5 mins before you need to
- Make sure the child keeps to bedtime routines strictly Sunday through Thursday

How can you get your child to keep the bedroom tidy?

Sometimes it seems easier to do it yourself then persuade your child to tidy their bedroom. But in the long term it's good if everyone takes responsibility for their own room. Below are some tips to help make this happen.

Breaking down a difficult task and making the rules simple and easy to follow will help. But at first, why not do the task together?

Then, with time and encouragement, your child should be able to do this job themselves.

Establish some rules

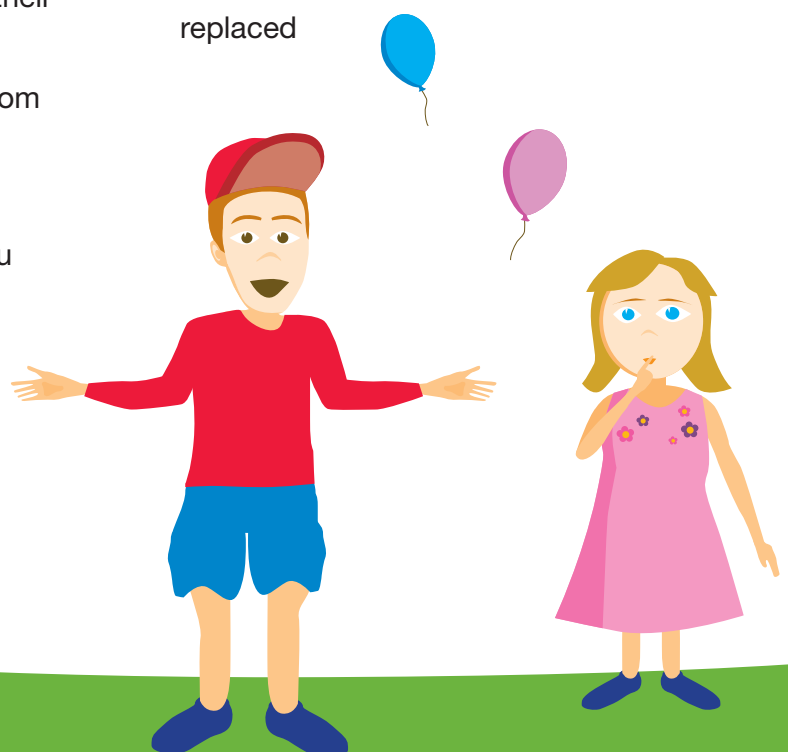
- After getting dressed, make the bed before breakfast
- Dirty clothes go in the wash basket after taking them off
- Put toys, discs and other stuff back into their boxes
- Put sports kit away when you get back from school
- Take plates and cups back to the kitchen
- Put towels back in the bathroom after you get dressed

Helpful tips:

- Try and make sure everyone in the house follows the rules
- Reward your child for following the rules
- Split up big tasks to make the rules easier to follow - 'put your discs on the shelf' is more specific than 'tidy your bedroom'

Play your part

- If a child doesn't look after toys or other things properly, limit the number of new ones you buy
- Give your child colour-coded containers and enough shelves to pack away their things more easily
- Point out that if things aren't put away, they get broken and dirty clothes aren't washed or replaced



How can you avoid accidents?

It can be dangerous if your child is reckless, impulsive and wants to show off. Be vigilant and reasonable over the activities your child does.

Try to avoid those activities where your child can damage themselves or others. For example;

- When your child is riding a bike, be firm and set rules about wearing helmets and road safety (of course this also applies to all children). If possible, try to keep an eye on them
- Get your child in the habit of putting bikes and toys away at night
- If the rules are broken, ground your child for a few days

How can you get your child to do homework?

- Make homework part of the daily routine
- Try to set up a system with the school, to remind them to help your child remember to bring the right books home. It may help if you have a set of text books that always stays at home
- Have a special homework place that is not his or her bedroom
- Fix a regular time, ideally late afternoon, after there's been a little time to unwind from school

- The homework should be done in chunks, with a short break between periods of work
- Offer help and supervise them and check the work

If at all possible, see if homework can be done at school. As a rule of thumb it can take children three times as long at home as it might at school.



How can you deal with challenging behaviour and improve it?

Children with ADHD have difficulty remembering what to do. The clearer your directions, the better they'll respond. At the same time, they need lots of praise and encouragement. Visual aids and prompts which outline rewards and consequences can help.

Task	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Get dressed before coming to breakfast	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Sit at table for Breakfast	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Take plate to sink when finished	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Clean teeth	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Put pyjamas under your pillow	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓

How can you get the message over loud and clear?

You need to address children with ADHD in the clearest possible way. Tell them what to do, not what not to do.

Here are some tips when giving instructions:

- Turn off any television, radio or electronic distractions
- Address your child by name, repeating their name several times throughout
- With young children, encourage them to look at you
- With older children, approach them from the front and tap them lightly on the arm or shoulder
- Look them straight in the eye
- Speak clearly without mumbling, nagging or shouting
- Tell them the end objective
- Then give your instructions in a simple step-by-step way
- KISS: Keep it Short and Simple

So you might say:

“Freddy, I want you to bring your homework downstairs. (PAUSE) First, please go upstairs to your bedroom. (PAUSE) Next, find your homework. Then, come downstairs and give it to me. Thank you.”

Children with ADHD get lots of criticism. Praise is much more effective – try to work with five times as much praise as criticism.

- When your child does something well, say how pleased you are that he or she has done it
- Praise in specific terms rather than generally



- If your child behaved well when out with you, say how pleased you were at the way he or she spoke to the person involved

Directive praise works best-

- Be specific to the task such as ‘Thank you for putting your bike away’

Inappropriate behaviour is seldom pre-meditated but your child still needs to be responsible for their actions.

How can you discipline in the right way?

Here are some key things to remember when disciplining a child with ADHD:

- Try not to show too much emotion
- Be specific
- Don’t say too much
- Remember KISS – keep it short and simple

Be clear it is the behaviour you disliked; separate the behaviour from the child. Let your child know that you disliked the bad behaviour. Instead of saying: “Chris, you behaved very badly today and thanks to you we had to cut short the trip.” You could say: “You shouted in the cinema, so we had to leave early. I am disappointed with the way you behaved”.

How can you avoid being drawn into arguments?

- Remember you are in charge and not all decisions can be democratic
- Remind your child that these are rules that you have both agreed on
- Keep calm
- Be firm but fair
- Stay on the subject and don't get distracted by other topics
- Don't get into arguments
- If necessary, keep repeating yourself until the message finally sinks in



One method of dealing with confrontation is to count slowly up to 3. Show visually using fingers. Tell your child what will happen when you reach 3. Leave a 5-second pause between each number.

Take time out or take a break

The idea of taking time out or a break is to let both you and your child cool down. This 'respite' enables the process of recovery and repair to begin.

- For younger children, have a special area – a chair, a corner, a step or a sofa that your child goes to when things are getting out of hand (not their bedroom but another room)
- Your child should be encouraged to ask to go there if he or she feels the need
- Your child stays in this place for a fixed length of time, such as 1 minute for every year of their age
- Use a kitchen timer to fix the time
- Allow no conversation during this period
- When the time has passed, you do not refer to the problem. The sentence has been served

If your child simply refuses to go, you can try the carrot-and-stick approach.

The carrot and stick approach

If time out doesn't work, the carrot-and-stick approach may.

- Think of something your child likes to do. It could be watching TV, playing on the computer or whatever
- Say, for example: "Nathan, I want you to go to the chair now. If you go now, you can watch TV tonight. If you don't go now, there will be no TV tonight. It's your choice"

How can we set up a reward scheme?

Just as supermarkets reward their customers for loyalty, you can set up your own good-behaviour scheme. You can do it on a short-term basis – to deal with particular events such as long car journeys or days out. You can do it on a long-term basis for a really big prize like a new bike or new trainers.



Types of reward scheme:

- Design a sticker chart or card or 'contract' for older children
- Award a sticker or a point every time your child does something positive
- Look out for the good things and ask your child to tell you when they have done something they are pleased with

It is important to be specific and name the good behaviour you are rewarding. Don't offer stickers or points too easily.

Build on success

Usually there is something that a child with ADHD will do very well. Your child may be good at painting, singing, swimming or playing computer games. When you discover what it is, emphasise that your child has a real talent. If you can create a feeling of success, it will be a real confidence booster, and of course, nothing succeeds like success.

How can you keep to routines?

Children with ADHD are happier and calmer if they know what to expect. With a regular routine with consistent structure, they become more familiar with what they need to do.

- So, try to get your child into the routines of starting each day in the same way and doing things in the same sequence; for example, wake up, get washed, have breakfast, clean teeth, pack school bag and lunch, and then go to school
- The more you can keep to routines the better, because any change creates distraction, uncertainty and chaos. One of the biggest problems facing children with ADHD is that they are easily distracted. This often leads to difficulty expressing themselves. They may also do things in the wrong order

So use visual aids: post reminders in places where they will be seen – this avoids you having to endlessly nag and helps your child take responsibility.

Helping your child to put events in the correct order will help. If your child is trying to explain something that happened, ask what happened first, then what happened next and so on.

How can you help them to get things done safely?

Your child needs to understand that things are meant to happen in a certain order.

- Always begin with a simple overview of what you want him or her to achieve
- Then create a framework with simple steps so that your child knows what is meant to happen next
- For some children it helps them to say out loud what they are about to do next

Make reminders and lists:

Useful memory prompts include visual reminders, sticky notes, student diaries and taping instructions to your child's book bags. With older children it's a good idea to plan things ahead with them. You can also help draw up a checklist of things to do. As children with ADHD grow older, lists can make their lives much easier.

How can you improve your child's memory?

- Encourage your child to use imagination to remember information or ideas; it's easier to remember someone is called David if you can imagine David Beckham for example when you think of him. Rhymes are also useful
- Mnemonics (words or groups of words that help memory) are also worth trying. It's a good idea to get your child to make up original mnemonics, like SCOT (Switch Computer Off Tonight)
- Repeat directions individually
- Use visual reminders
- Colour-code the homework diary

How can you involve the school?

ADHD can have its greatest effects when a child is at school. Lack of attention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness can all have a huge impact on learning and behaviour.

Teachers are important in the development of your child and will have to deal with the day-to-day effects of ADHD. It is important that they are aware of why your child acts the way he or she does and how they can help your child to achieve full potential.

You may want to arrange with your child's teacher to have regular meetings about progress at school. It could also help if they let you know about any particular problems.

How is ADHD treated?

Management of children and young people with ADHD may involve the following:

- Parent training / education programme
 - a structured training programme with behavioural strategies to improve parenting skills in order to manage your child's challenging behaviour.
- Educational interventions and support at school
- Psychological treatment to help your child cope with his/her feelings and behaviour
- Social skills training – teaching people to be more socially aware in their relationships with other people
- Medication is available to treat ADHD



NICE is the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence an independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health. They have produced national guidelines which recommend medication to be used in severe ADHD or moderate ADHD where behavioural or other approaches have not proved effective.

Medication is not a cure but it could be a valuable means of helping children concentrate, learn and behave more effectively. Most children with ADHD respond well to medication but it should only be used as part of a wide range of psychological, behavioural and educational advice and interventions.

How does the medication work?

Research has shown that the medication works by increasing the amounts of chemicals naturally in the brain (doctors call these natural chemicals dopamine and noradrenaline).

What kinds of medication are available to treat ADHD?

There are two types of medications - stimulant (methylphenidate, dexamfetamine) and non-stimulant (atomoxetine) that are recommended as options for the treatment of ADHD.

ADHD medication:

Methylphenidate: is available as a short acting tablet and long acting tablet or capsule. The short acting tablet needs to be taken two or three times a day. The long acting tablet or capsule is taken once a day in the morning.

Atomoxetine: is available as a capsule that is taken once or twice a day.

Dexamfetamine: is available as a short acting tablet taken daily in divided doses.

The dose of medication should be tailored to the child's needs and depends on their response and any side effects.

What are the side effects of medications?

Some common side effects of stimulant medications (methylphenidate) include: reduced appetite, stomach ache, feeling sick, headaches and trouble sleeping. Side effects of atomoxetine include: reduced appetite, feeling sick, stomach ache, sleepiness and mood swings. Stimulant and other medications used to treat ADHD do not cause a 'high'. The ADHD symptoms can reappear when the effect of medication wears off but there is no evidence that children start to depend on these medications.

Your child's doctor will monitor the medication carefully. It is important that you discuss with your child's doctor if your child develops any side effects or if you have any other concerns.

Is monitoring important?

It is important that your child's progress is monitored when he or she starts treatment for ADHD. Your child's doctor will want to monitor not only your child's behaviour and whether the treatment is working, but also whether they are having any side effects from the medication. You may have received a monitoring booklet from the doctor. You and your child's teacher will probably need to complete the booklet once a week. The doctor will want to see this so that treatment can be adjusted if necessary.

Any medication that the doctor recommends could cause side effects. These can be different in each child. It is important that the doctor knows about any changes that occur, once your child starts taking the medication. So try to record anything you notice in your child.

How long should your child continue the medication?

Encourage your child to take the medication regularly. While your child stays on the medication, the doctor will check his or her progress periodically. In due course, the doctor may advise you to see if your child can cope without it.

It is recommended that treatment with medication is continued as long as it is effective and that the doctor reviews, at least annually, the clinical need, benefits and side effects of medication, your views and those of your child, teacher and the need for other behavioural and psychological therapies.

It is important to follow the doctor's instructions exactly. Don't increase the dose by more than advised or suddenly stop your child's medication.

Should you let the school know?

It is vital that the school knows your child is being treated for ADHD. They can help you monitor your child's progress and help in the process.

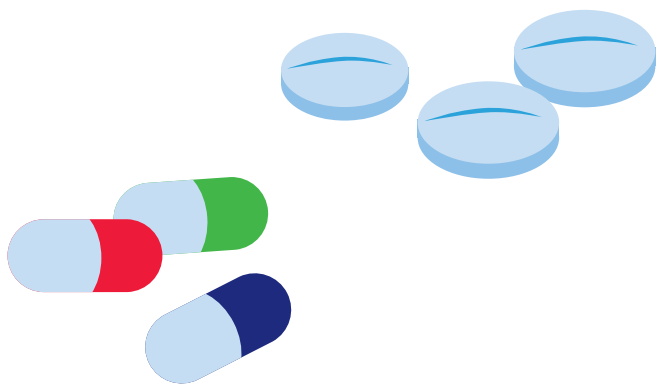
An information booklet on ADHD for teachers is also available. Similar in style to this booklet, it contains special advice on coping with ADHD in the classroom. Please ask your doctor for a copy and give it to your child's teacher.



Taking medication at school

Your child may need to take their ADHD medication during the day.

- You should let the school know how much your child needs to take and when
- It would be helpful if your child is monitored when treatment starts, so if it is during term time, school could help by completing a monitoring booklet. You will need to show this to your child's doctor



What about diet and should I make any changes?

Some food colourants and preservatives can worsen the child's behaviour. Avoiding foods and drinks that contain artificial colours and / or preservatives may help some children with ADHD.

It is important that your child has a healthy and balanced diet with regular exercise. Dietary fatty acids supplements are not recommended for the treatment of ADHD.

Will my child grow out of ADHD?

As they get older, some children show improvement in ADHD symptoms. About two thirds of children continue to have problems as teenagers and some may have problems into adulthood.

This booklet was produced with the help of the following people:

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Consultant Community Paediatrician

Fintan O'Regan,
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Dr Val Harpin,
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Getting more information

Books for children

Everything a child needs to know about ADHD

by Dr C R Yemula,
published by ADDISS, UK, 2nd edition 2007

My Doctor Says I Have ADHD - A Child's Journey

by Dr C R Yemula,
published by Health Insights 4U Ltd, UK, 2008

Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention: A Book for Kids About ADHD

by Kathleen G. Nadeau, Ellen B. Dixon,
published by Magination Press

Putting on the Brakes: Understanding and Taking Control of Your ADD/ADHD

by Patricia O. Quinn, Judith M. Stern,
published by Magination Press

Attention Girls!

A Guide to Learn All About AD/HD

by Patricia O. Quinn,
published by Magination Press (American
Psychological Association), 2009

Books for parents/carers

Understanding ADHD

by Christopher Green and Kit Chee,
published by Vermillion, 1997

1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12

by Thomas Phelan,
published by Parentmagic.inc, 2003

ADHD websites

www.addiss.co.uk
www.adders.org

Patient family support groups

To find a support group in your local area, get in touch with **ADDISS**:

ADDISS is the **National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service** that provides information, training and support for parents, sufferers and professionals in the fields of ADHD and related learning and behavioural difficulties.

ADDISS,
Premier House
112 Station Road
Edgware
Middlesex HA8 7BJ

Phone: 020 8952 2800 Fax: 020 8952 2909

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All patient quotes are fictitious but are based on market research of those affected by ADHD.

The background is a solid green color. There are three stylized white clouds with light blue outlines. One cloud is in the top left, another is in the middle right, and a third is in the bottom right. The clouds have soft, rounded edges and are partially cut off by the edges of the page.

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For further information
www.adhdandyou.co.uk