

Understanding ADHD: Information for Parents



Almost all children have times when their behavior veers out of control. They may speed about in constant motion, make noise nonstop, refuse to wait their turn, and crash into everything around them. At other times they may drift as if in a daydream, unable to pay attention or finish what they start.

However, for some children, these kinds of behaviors are more than an occasional problem. Children with **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** have behavior problems that are so frequent and severe that they interfere with their ability to live normal lives.

In the UK it's thought that between 2% to 5% of school aged children have ADHD. Boys are more than twice as likely as girls to be diagnosed with ADHD. Both boys and girls with the disorder typically show symptoms of an additional mental disorder and may also have learning and language problems.

ADHD is a chronic condition of the brain that makes it difficult for children to control their behavior.

The condition affects behavior in specific ways. For example, children with ADHD often have trouble getting along with siblings and other children at school, at home, and in other settings. Those who have trouble paying attention usually have trouble learning. An impulsive nature may put them in actual physical danger. Because children with ADHD have difficulty controlling this behavior, they may be labeled "bad kids" or "space cadets."

ADHD includes 3 groups of behavior symptoms: inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

Symptoms of ADHD	
Behavior symptom:	How a child with this symptom may behave:
Inattention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often has a hard time paying attention, daydreams • Often does not seem to listen • Is easily distracted from work or play • Often does not seem to care about details, makes careless mistakes • Frequently does not follow through on instructions or finish tasks • Is disorganized • Frequently loses a lot of important things • Often forgets things • Frequently avoids doing things that require ongoing mental effort
Hyperactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is in constant motion, as if "driven by a motor" • Cannot stay seated • Frequently squirms and fidgets • Talks too much • Often runs, jumps, and climbs when this is not permitted • Cannot play quietly
Impulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently acts and speaks without thinking • May run into the street without looking for traffic first • Frequently has trouble taking turns • Cannot wait for things • Often calls out answers before the question is complete • Frequently interrupts others

Not all children with ADHD have all the symptoms.

Children with ADHD may have one or more of the symptom groups listed in the table above. The symptoms are usually classified by the following types of ADHD:

- **Inattentive only (formerly known as attention-deficit disorder [ADD])**—Children with this form of ADHD are not overly active. Because they do not disrupt the classroom or other activities, their symptoms may not be noticed. Among girls with ADHD, this form is more common.
- **Hyperactive/impulsive**—Children with this type of ADHD show both hyperactive and impulsive behavior, but they can pay attention. They are the least common group and are frequently younger.
- **Combined inattentive/hyperactive/impulsive**—Children with this type of ADHD show a number of symptoms in all 3 dimensions. It is the type that most people think of when they think of ADHD.

You can provide support at home or school by helping your child with:

- Structure and organisation
- Waiting
- Rules and instructions
- Sitting and concentrating
- Impulsivity and distractions
- Not interrupting others

What can help? What to do.

These are some things that may really make a difference:

1. Go to the GP or school if you are worried that your child may have ADHD.
2. Request an assessment. A diagnosis can help you move forwards.
3. ADHD is a whole-family issue. It affects home life and holidays. Make sure that all family members understand what is going on. Integrate it into family life, normalise it try to stop it dominating day to day life. Keep a balance of attention in the family and let each family member have their say.
4. Children with ADHD are likely to be difficult and challenging in their behaviour and attitude both at home and at school.
5. Avoid giving the child with ADHD the 'bad reputation' in the family.
6. It is important to maintain boundaries and discipline and not put up with disobedience, swearing or violence.
7. Ensure you provide a healthy lifestyle with balanced diet, activity and sleep routines.
8. Avoid food additives and colourings; there is some evidence that children with ADHD are particularly sensitive to these. Discuss this with a GP or dietician if you are unsure.
9. Help your child manage their frustration, poor attention span and high energy with consistent strategies.
10. Give simple instructions – get close, make eye contact, talk slowly and calmly.
11. Help them with waiting, rules and instructions, sitting and concentrating, impulses and distractions, not interrupting or disrupting others.
12. Praise your child when they have done what is required, however small (but be careful not to overpraise).
13. Write lists and post them up somewhere visible (fridge/backdoor).
14. Break up necessary sit-down times such as meals and homework into smaller, manageable chunks, say 15-20 minutes.
15. Look after yourself - find out about local parenting programmes and support groups, which can really help.

FINDING SUPPORT	
<p>www.addiss.co.uk</p> <p>The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service. Provides information and resources about ADHD and the variety of approaches that can help including; behavioural therapy, medication, individual counselling, and special education provision.</p> <p>Open Monday-Friday during office hours Phone: 020 8952 2800</p> <p>Email: info@addiss.co.uk</p>	<p>www.adhdfoundation.org.uk</p> <p>The Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder Foundation provides training to professionals around the UK. Their 'Information and Support' section has content on a range of areas for parents and carers, including recognising ADHD and tips on behaviour management.</p>
<p>ADHD and You</p> <p>www.adhdandyou.co.uk</p> <p>Information about ADHD, diagnosis, treatment and tips for everyday life.</p>	<p>Hyperactive Children's Support Group</p> <p>www.hacsg.org.uk</p> <p>For hyperactive and ADHD children and their families. Provides information particularly regarding hyperactivity and diet.</p> <p>Open: Monday to Friday 14:30-16:30 Phone: 01243 539966 Email: hacsg@hacsg.org.uk</p>
<p>NHS</p> <p>www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd Provides an overview of ADHD along with symptoms, causes, diagnosis, treatment and tips on how to live with ADHD.</p>	<p>Contact</p> <p>www.contact.org.uk</p> <p>The national charity for families with children with disabilities. Provides online, printed and helpline advice on education, benefits and finances, childcare, social care, medical information and more.</p> <p>Open Monday to Friday 9:30am-5pm Freephone helpline: 0808 808 3555</p> <p>Email: info@contact.org.uk</p>

<p>YoungSibs</p> <p>www.youngsibs.org.uk</p> <p>Online support service for children and young people (aged 6 to 17) who have a brother or sister with a disability, special educational need or serious long-term condition. Peer-to-peer online chat with other siblings:</p> <p>www.youngsibs.org.uk/chat Ask a sibling advisor:</p> <p>www.youngsibs.org.uk/ask-sibling-advisor</p>	<p>Youth Welbeing Directory</p> <p>www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/youth-welbeing</p> <p>Lists local services for young people's mental health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Youth Access</p> <p>www.youthaccess.org.uk</p> <p>Offers information about local advice and counselling services for young people.</p>	<p>MindEd</p> <p>www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html</p> <p>A website where you can hear about other parents' experiences and find clear, helpful guidance on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing – including around ADHD.</p>