



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) parent/carer information sheet

ADHD is a developmental condition that is formally diagnosed and symptoms exist from mild to severe. ADHD is used to describe children who typically have the following problems:

Overactive behaviour (hyperactivity). For example:

- Fidgets, is restless and can't sit still.
- Cannot stop talking and is noisy.
- Runs about when it is inappropriate.

Impulsive behaviour. For example:

- Interrupts others.
- Blurts out answers without waiting for the question to be finished.
- Difficulty in waiting or taking turns.
- Difficulties managing their emotions.

Difficulty in paying attention and distractibility (inattention). For example:

- Difficulty following instructions, starting or completing tasks – short attention span.
- Difficulty organising tasks and activities and shifting focus on from thing to another.
- Easily distracted, does not listen and is forgetful.

There are three subtypes of ADHD: 'predominantly inattentive', 'predominantly hyperactive-impulsive' and 'combined inattention and hyperactive impulsive'. It is also important to recognise that not all children diagnosed with ADHD have all the symptoms. ADHD can also present differently depending on other factors, e.g. the child's learning ability, self-esteem, speech and language skills, family involvement and experiences of school.

Children diagnosed with ADHD can:

Have low self-esteem

Develop emotional and social problems

Underachieve at school

Be at risk of school exclusion

However, these can be reduced or eliminated with the right support and regular home-school contact.

How does a child diagnosed with ADHD feel?

For a child diagnosed with ADHD the world can be a constant stream of changing information. It can be difficult to focus and hard to keep pace. Children diagnosed with ADHD also explain that they get lots of different thoughts at the same time. It can be confusing and they can feel they are often in 'trouble' with adults. They can also feel unpopular at times and that nobody understands them.

Parenting a child with ADHD

Parenting a child with ADHD can be challenging and it is good to ask for support when you need it (e.g. from school, GP or ADHD groups). Parenting a child with ADHD, like parenting generally, can also be very rewarding and it can help to note down the positives about your child so you have these to look back at and share with professionals if your child goes through any difficult times.

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Strategies for home

These are examples of strategies for children diagnosed with ADHD that can be used by parents and carers. However, every child is different so parents and carers should carefully consider which strategies to use. The parent or carer can also contact support (information below).

1. The importance of routine

It is important to put a routine in place even though this can be hard with children diagnosed with ADHD. Keep it simple to start with because once you have the basics working you can add more. It can help if the routine is:

- Planned with your child so they feel part of the solution.
- Uses visuals and simple written information (appropriate to age), for example a checklist as this is easier to follow and can be looked at again and again.
- Supported by countdown reminders.

2. Focus on positive behaviour

- It is important to give lots of praise about positive behaviour to increase your child's self-esteem and this will help them cope emotionally when you have to talk about inappropriate behaviour. We do not always point out positive behaviour so give yourself a target, for example praise three things each hour.
- Praise is best when it is focussed on effort not achievement and is not too general. E.g: 'you worked hard at question 4, well done' instead of 'you did well' or 'you wrote a good answer'.

3. Adult communication

- a) Use your child's name before speaking.
- b) Give short and simple instructions (e.g. 1/2 instructions with 5 words maximum per sentence).
- c) Give your child time to process the instructions (extremely important!!).

4. Learning at home

- a) Set up short tasks with regular, short breaks. In the break your child can do a short fun activity or some exercise.
- b) Clearly break up the learning tasks so make a checklist to tick off, e.g. '5 minutes reading, 5 minutes answering 3 questions, 5 minutes going through answers with mum, 5 minutes break'.
- c) If your child finds it hard to start tasks, work out the first step together with them and write or draw it so they can look at it when working on their own.

Places for parents and carers or children to go for additional support

ADHD foundation: https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/information/parents/	Your GP or 111 for health concerns or 999 if an emergency
Local Authority support: https://www.knowsleyinfo.co.uk/categories/covid-19-news-send	Childline (for your child): 08001111 (9am – midnight)
The SENCO at your child's school	

Information written/ adapted from <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk> by Dr Francesca Heffernan (educational psychologist). May 2020 for parents and carers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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