



## Advice and Information for Parents and Carers

# ADHD

### About ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a group of behavioural symptoms that include inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. According to age and setting, the behaviours associated with ADHD are often described as 'disruptive' but it is important to remember the positives too. Not all children have all the symptoms.

- **Hyperactive-impulsive children** seem overly restless, fidgety, full of energy, loud and noisy; they do things repeatedly without thinking, find it hard to wait their turn in games and interrupt others in conversation. **Positive strengths** mean that children have good energy, they are hardworking, they persevere at tasks and are eager to try new things.
- **Inattentive children** can appear overly forgetful, distracted, disorganised, unable to listen or concentrate, slow to start tasks or finish them. **Positive strengths** mean that children are often creative, intelligent, determined and good at problem-solving.
- **Hyperactive-impulsive-inattentive children (combination type)** make up the majority of ADHD cases. Other symptoms include lack of co-ordination, organisation and social skills, learning difficulties, autism, conduct disorder, anxiety, depression and neurological problems such as tics, Tourette Syndrome and epilepsy. **Positive strengths** can be a combination of positive attributes for ADHD.

### Diagnosis and support

Getting a diagnosis of ADHD requires a specialist (child psychiatrist or paediatrician) assessment. This involves recognising patterns of behaviour - observing the child, obtaining reports of behaviour at home and at school, and sometimes using computerised tests. Together, these can inform an effective care plan to support the child in achieving their full potential.

Those who receive specialist support plans tailored to their needs, see the benefits in their learning, friendships, employability and life skills as they understand how best to cope and adapt.

Some people struggle to get effective support and continue to have major problems into adulthood in all the above-mentioned areas. About one in three people diagnosed with ADHD as a child, will grow out of the condition and not require any support plan when adults.

### **Understanding potential impact on individual, home, school and relationships\***

Some of the challenges that children with ADHD can face and the wider impact on the family, school staff and other children include: difficulties in school and friendships, underperforming in school and engaging in antisocial activities. Children with ADHD are more likely to:

- Drop out of school
- Have few or no friends
- Engage in social activities
- Experience teen pregnancy
- Experience depression
- Develop personality disorders

### **Possible causes of ADHD\***

ADHD is not caused by poor parenting, family stress, divorce, excessive online and gaming activity or diet. Some of these factors, however can have an effect on a pre-existing condition.

ADHD is caused by a complicated combination of multiple factors. These factors include changes in those parts of the brain which control impulses and concentration (neurobiological factors) and genetic, inherited and environmental factors.

If a family has one ADHD child, there is a 30-40% chance that another brother/sister will also have the condition and a 45% chance (or greater) that at least one parent has the condition. If the child with ADHD has an identical twin, the likelihood that the twin will also have the disorder is about 90%.

In a small percentage of cases, ADHD can be linked to injury to specific regions of the brain during early development. For example, use of alcohol or tobacco during pregnancy, premature delivery with associated minor brain bleeding or accidental head injury after birth, could all cause ADHD-like symptoms.

\*Sourced from ADDISS [www.addiss.co.uk/schoolreport.pdf](http://www.addiss.co.uk/schoolreport.pdf)

### **Challenging stigma around ADHD**

Openness, close involvement and resilience help promote more positive attitudes to ADHD.

- Share information about the condition with family, teachers and other professionals and the child her/himself
- Use behaviour management strategies, such as reward charts and parenting courses
- Build educational support by working in partnership with the school, e.g. agreeing plans for class-and homework
- Help your child with social skills to increase their confidence and strengthen their friendships

## Developing strategies to work positively with children with ADHD

The best strategies for behaviour management of ADHD are those where the child is directly involved in, or leading, the plan so that they own it. Young people tell us that supportive relationships with one or more adults is key to making a difference.

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

**Medications** can play an important role in treating moderate to severe ADHD, helping to reduce hyperactivity and improve concentration, which in turn improves learning skills and applying the learning.

## What does it feel like to have ADHD?

Children talk about the impact of having ADHD:

*"It's a different perspective on the world."*

*"Everything is going faster than other people's brains."*

*"If I'm interested in something like the guitar I can do it all day. If I'm not interested I just shut it out and think about something I do find interesting."*

*"Without an assessment I would be on a downwards spiral. I would have been expelled from primary school for being violent."*

*"Don't treat all people with ADHD the same as they are all individuals with separate personalities. ADHD isn't a personality, it's an effect."*

*"I interrupt a lot. Sometimes I forget that other people are speaking or my brain just dismisses it as not important, even though I know I shouldn't."*

*"Medication really, really makes me anxious."*

*"I still get angry despite medication."*

*"In school medication helps me focus on my work and stay calm. It makes me focus more but it isn't me, I feel free at the weekend when I'm not on it."*

*"You'll never understand what it's like to have ADHD unless you have it, and that has to be taken into account."*

# 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

All references listed on this sheet are for information only. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, YoungMinds cannot accept responsibility for changes to details made by other organisations.

## ADDISS

[www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk)

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.

Open Monday-Friday during office hours

Phone: 020 8952 2800

Email: [info@addiss.co.uk](mailto:info@addiss.co.uk)

## ADHD Foundation

[www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)

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.

## ADHD and You

[www.adhdandyou.co.uk](http://www.adhdandyou.co.uk)

Information about ADHD, diagnosis, treatment and tips for everyday life.

## Hyperactive Children's Support Group

[www.hacsg.org.uk](http://www.hacsg.org.uk)

For hyperactive and ADHD children and their families. Provides information particularly regarding hyperactivity and diet.

Open: Monday to Friday 14:30-16:30

Phone: 01243 539966

Email: [hacsg@hacsg.org.uk](mailto:hacsg@hacsg.org.uk)

## NHS

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd](http://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.

## Contact

[www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk)

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.

Open Monday to Friday 9:30am-5pm

Freephone helpline: 0808 808 3555

Email: [info@contact.org.uk](mailto:info@contact.org.uk)

## YoungSibs

[www.youngsibs.org.uk](http://www.youngsibs.org.uk)

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:  
[www.youngsibs.org.uk/chat](http://www.youngsibs.org.uk/chat)

Ask a sibling advisor:  
[www.youngsibs.org.uk/ask-sibling-advisor](http://www.youngsibs.org.uk/ask-sibling-advisor)

## Youth Wellbeing Directory

[www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/youth-wellbeing](http://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/youth-wellbeing)

Lists local services for young people's mental health and wellbeing.

## Youth Access

[www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)

Offers information about local advice and counselling services for young people.

## MindEd

[www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html](http://www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html)

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.

**CRISIS TEXT LINE** |

**Text YM to 85258**

If you, or someone you are caring for, is experiencing a mental health crisis, you can message YoungMinds Crisis Text Line. Free. 24/7 support.

Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 2 Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus. Powered by our trusted partner, Crisis Text Line.