



ADHD: A guide for parents

This handout provides an overview of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) for parents, signs to look out for, information that shows how common it is, and treatment options.

What is ADHD?

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting a child's ability to pay attention, control impulses, and manage hyperactivity. ADHD symptoms often emerge before school age and can impact daily functioning across multiple areas, like home life, school, and social situations.

Types of ADHD and symptoms

There are three types of ADHD, each with distinct symptoms:

<p>1. Inattentive type (e.g., struggles with focus)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor attention to detail and often makes careless mistakes. • Difficulty sustaining attention and may appear to zone out or not seem to be listening when spoken to directly. • Struggles to follow through with instructions or fail to finish tasks. • Needs help organizing tasks and activities. • Avoids or dislikes tasks that take sustained time and effort. • Often loses things necessary for everyday tasks (e.g. schoolwork, keys, homework). • Easily distracted. • Forgetful in daily activities.
<p>2. Hyperactive/impulsive type (e.g., struggles with impulse control)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often fidgets, taps hands or feet, or squirms in their seat. • Frequently leaves their seat in situations where staying seated is expected. • Runs around or climbs excessively in inappropriate situations (or for teens/adults, often feels restless). • Struggles to play or engage in activities quietly. • Appears to be constantly “on the go,” acting as if “driven by a motor.” • Talks excessively. • Often blurts out answers before questions are completed. • Struggles to wait their turn. • Frequently interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butting into conversations or games).
<p>3. Combined type</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays symptoms from both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive types.



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Key statistics about ADHD

- Approximately 7 million children in the United States between the ages of three and 17 have been diagnosed with ADHD.
- ADHD is more common in boys, impacting 15% of males and 8% of girls.
- Children with ADHD often have other mental health conditions. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 78% of children with ADHD also have conditions like anxiety, depression, or autism.
- Treatment varies depending on the state, with 58% to 92% of children receiving treatment.

Source: [Data and Statistics on ADHD | CDC](#)

Treatment options

There are two main treatment options:

Medication

- **Stimulants** (e.g., Ritalin, Adderall) are the most widely used treatment for children with ADHD.
- **Non-stimulants** (e.g., Wellbutrin) may also be used if stimulants are not tolerated or a non-stimulant is preferred.

Behavioral therapy

Therapists work with children to promote and support overall functioning, school performance, and relationships. This might include:

- Developing executive functioning strategies like using planners, checklists, and color coding.
- Focusing on family communication and creating affirming environments.

Supporting your child with ADHD

- **Seek an assessment:** Early diagnosis is critical to accessing resources.
- **Advocate for accommodations:** Ask for classroom support like deadline extensions or quiet spaces.
- **Create affirming spaces:** Provide a calming area at home for sensory regulation.
- **Build a support network:** Work with therapists, educators, and medical professionals.
- **Parent support groups:** Connect with other parents for guidance and encouragement.



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Can children with ADHD thrive?

Yes! With understanding, structure, and the right resources, children with ADHD can lead fulfilling lives. Focus on fostering their unique strengths and creating an environment that supports neurodiverse ways of thinking and doing.

Talk to your pediatrician or therapist for additional resources, or contact local ADHD support groups, such as the Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder ([CHADD Affiliate Locator](#)).

Key takeaways

- ADHD is more than being distractible or energetic. Symptoms significantly impact a child's life and can lead to struggles in school, at home, and socially.
- However, ADHD is manageable with proper support, and children can thrive with the right therapeutic interventions and accommodations.

Notes: