



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

PARENT RESOURCES

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that makes it unusually difficult for children to concentrate, to pay attention, to sit still, to follow directions, and to control impulsive behaviour. While all young children are at times distractible, restless, and oblivious to parents' and teachers' instructions, children with ADHD behave this way much more often than other children their age. And their inability to settle down, focus, and follow through on tasks in age-appropriate ways makes it very hard for them to do what's expected of them at school. It can also lead to conflict at home and difficulty getting along with peers.

HOW WILL MY CHILD MANAGE AT SCHOOL?

Children with ADHD often have problems with their behaviour at school, and the condition can negatively affect a child's academic progress.

Speak to your child's teachers or our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) about any extra support your child may need.

In some circumstances, we may suggest an application should be made for an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) in order to provide emotional support for your child.

The school has a toolkit of strategies to help support children with ADHD.

Children with ADHD generally have deficits in executive function: the ability to think and plan ahead, organise, control impulses, and complete tasks. That means you need to take over as the executive, providing extra guidance while your child gradually acquires executive skills of their own.

Your child who is ignoring, annoying, or embarrassing you is not acting wilfully. They want to sit quietly; they want to make their rooms tidy and organised; they want to do everything their parent says to do—but they don't know how to make these things happen.



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SYMPTOMS OF ADHD ARE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS: INATTENTIVE BEHAVIOURS AND HYPERACTIVE AND IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOURS.

INATTENTIVE SYMPTOMS OF ADHD:

- Makes careless mistakes
- Is easily distracted
- Doesn't seem to be listening when spoken to directly
- Has difficulty following instructions
- Has trouble organizing
- Avoids or dislikes sustained effort
- Is forgetful, always losing things

HYPERACTIVE OR IMPULSIVE SYMPTOMS OF ADHD:

- Fidgeting or squirming
- Trouble staying in one place or waiting his turn
- Excessive running and climbing
- Trouble playing quietly
- Extreme impatience
- Always seems to be "on the go" or "driven by a motor"
- Excessive talking or interrupting, blurting out answers

Some children exhibit only the first group of ADHD symptoms, and some exhibit only the latter. But the majority of those with an ADHD diagnosis have a combination of both, which can make it very difficult for them to function in school and in other activities, and can create a lot of conflict at home.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING?

Most children with ADHD have deficits in some executive functions, though not all children with executive function issues have ADHD.

Executive functions are the self-regulating skills that we all use to accomplish tasks, from getting dressed to doing homework. They include:

- Planning
- Organizing time and materials
- Making decisions
- Shifting from one situation to another
- Controlling emotions
- Learning from past mistakes



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WHY CAN CHILDREN WITH ADHD CONCENTRATE ON SOME THINGS? WHAT IS ADHD HYPERFOCUS?

While ADHD is called an attention deficit disorder, experts say what's really disordered is the child's ability to control and direct what he's paying attention to. So many children with ADHD are capable of intense focus on things that are very exciting to them, like video games, but they can't maintain that kind of focus on things that aren't immediately rewarding, like schoolwork or putting on their shoes or going to bed.

That intense concentration, sometimes called hyperfocus, is also the reason children with ADHD often get upset when asked to stop doing something they are engaged in, like a favourite activity at school or playing a video game. They have what experts call an inability to "attention switch," which can cause a lot of conflicts with adults.

Because computer games are constantly stimulating and rewarding, they can induce a kind of trance state in a child who has trouble regulating her attention.

PLAN THE DAY

Set routines can make a difference to how a child with ADHD copes with everyday life.

For example, if your child has to get ready for school, break it down into structured steps, so they know exactly what they need to do.

SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Make sure your child knows what behaviour is expected, and reinforce positive behaviour with immediate praise or rewards. Be clear, using enforceable consequences, such as taking away a privilege, if boundaries are overstepped and follow these through consistently.

THINK OUT LOUD

Children with ADHD often lack impulse control. This means they may say or do something without thinking it through. Getting them to pause and say out loud what they are thinking can have several benefits.

It can allow the parent to learn their child's thought patterns. It can also give the child time to consider their thought, and whether or not to act on it.



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MANAGING 'EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS'

Children with ADHD will often have emotional outbursts when they get upset. How you react to them, can help calm them down.

Children with ADHD behave in a certain way for a reason and what you see is just the tip of the iceberg. Listening to them without talking but acknowledging their frustration and anger may help to calm them down.

Some children will find it difficult to express their emotions appropriately, and as a result display challenging behaviour.

- Make sure they get enough sleep, eat regular and healthy meals, and have enough 'down time' to reduce any stress.
- Pick your battles, and be clear to your child – and yourself – about your expectations.
- Children with ADHD need structure so follow a routine. Their behaviour will be less challenging if they know what is happening next and when it is happening.
- Set expectations. Before you want an activity to change – such as turning off the device and getting ready for bed or coming in from the garden for dinner – give your child a warning. The same comes when leaving the house – warn them 10 minutes beforehand.
- Stay calm. If your child does have an outburst, it may be hard for you to stay calm, especially if this is happening in a public place. Try to talk quietly to your child; don't shout – seeing you act in a controlled way may help your child to calm down.
- Be understanding. If you see that your child is getting upset, ask them what's wrong. Listen to what the child tells you and explain that you can understand why they are upset. Children can find it reassuring that someone understands their concern.
- Encourage deep breaths. Deep breathing can be relaxing and can help relieve the stress that caused the 'meltdown' in the first place.
- Set rules for outbursts. No matter how hard you try to avoid them, angry outbursts are bound to happen. When it's over and they are calm, you and your child should discuss what happened, and agree what to do if they get upset or angry in the future. Your child is more likely to come out of it more quickly if they know what to expect.



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ADHD IN GIRLS

One of the most common symptoms linked with ADHD is hyperactivity. Hyperactivity, fidgeting, and the inability to sit still are typical behaviours for boys dealing with the disorder. This isn't always the case for girls with ADHD.

ADHD symptoms in girls are often thought of as a girl's personality rather than ADHD, which is why they are often overlooked.

In girls, ADHD is often referred to as a 'hidden disorder'. Most girls with ADHD have the inattentive type, which means that they have problems focusing but are not hyperactive and impulsive. But even those who are hyperactive and impulsive present with fewer obvious symptoms than boys, so it often goes unnoticed or unacknowledged. Instead of a diagnosis, girls with ADHD often get criticism from parents, teachers, and peers, and the fallout takes a serious toll on self-esteem.

INATTENTIVE

For many girls with ADHD, paying attention to a task is their biggest challenge. They can get distracted or 'zone out'. Although a girl with ADHD may hyperfocus on an activity she likes or is good at, she may put in more effort in, so parents or teachers may dismiss the possibility of ADHD. Sometimes this hyperfocus is a coping strategy to keep herself entertained when something is boring.

CONTINUALLY MOVING

If a girl is hyperactive, she might be described as a 'tomboy' because she likes physical activity and doesn't seem to enjoy the 'typical things' a girl does. She might also be in motion in less obvious ways, perhaps doodling constantly or moving around in her chair.

LACK OF IMPULSE CONTROL

A girl with impulsivity can be very talkative, interrupting others, or talking excessively. She might blurt out words without thinking about how this may affect others.

She may be very sensitive. Some girls are described as overemotional, "drama queens," and easily excitable.



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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Not all girls with ADHD will display all of these signs and symptoms, but having one or two does not mean they have ADHD. However, if your daughter seems to exhibit a few of these symptoms on a continual basis, a discussion with an experienced professional may be beneficial:

- Seems to get easily upset
- Can't focus on one activity
- Takes time to process information and directions; seems like she doesn't hear you
- Verbally impulsive; blurts out and interrupts other
- Appears withdrawn
- Cries easily
- Zoning out - daydreaming and in a world of her own
- Easily distracted
- Disorganised and untidy
- Doesn't appear to be trying
- Appears unmotivated
- Forgetful
- Very sensitive to noise, fabrics and emotions
- Very talkative but struggles to listen
- Hyperactivity - exaggerated emotional responses
- Appears to make "careless" mistakes
- Often late (poor time management)
- Struggle to complete tasks
- Appears shy

BEDTIME

Stick to a routine. Make sure your child goes to bed at the same time each night and gets up at the same time in the morning.

Avoid overstimulating activities in the hours before bedtime, such as computer games or watching TV.

Sleep problems and ADHD can be a vicious cycle. ADHD can lead to sleep problems, which in turns can make symptoms worse.

Many children with ADHD will repeatedly get up after being put to bed and have interrupted sleeping patterns. Trying a routine can help your child and make bed time calmer.



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GIVING INSTRUCTION

If you're asking your child to do something specific, give brief instructions and be specific. Instead of asking: "Can you tidy your room?" say "Please put your toys into the box and put the books back onto the shelf."

This makes it clearer what your child needs to do and creates opportunities for praise when they get it right.

INTERVENE EARLY

Watch for warning signs. If your child looks like they're becoming frustrated, overstimulated and about to lose self-control, intervene.

Distract your child, if possible, by taking them away from the situation. This may calm them down.

SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Keep social situations short and sweet. Invite friends to play, but keep playtimes short so your child doesn't lose self-control. Don't aim to do this when your child is feeling tired or hungry, such as after a day at school.

EXERCISE

Make sure your child gets lots of physical activity during the day. Walking, skipping and playing sports can help your child wear themselves out and improve their quality of sleep.

SIMPLIFY AND ORGANISE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE

Create a quiet space for your child to read, do homework, and take a break from everyday life. Keep your home organised so that your child knows where everything goes. This reduces unnecessary distractions.

Decrease time on electronics and easily accessible distractions.

GIVE PRAISE

Give specific praise. Instead of saying a general: "thanks for doing that," you could say: "you washed the dishes really well. Thank you"

This will make it clear to your child that you're pleased and why.



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PARENTS/CARERS WELL-BEING

Parenting/caring can be rewarding, but at times physically and emotionally draining. To enable you to support your child effectively, you need to ensure you are monitoring your own well-being. Keep a check on your personal physical and mental health and seek your own support when needed.

USEFUL CONTACTS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/adhd-children-teenagers/>

<https://www.additudemag.com/>

USEFUL PARENT/CARER SUPPORT

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.ukadhd.com/support-groups.htm>

<http://www.addiss.co.uk/>

RECOMMENDED READING

