

ADHD – ways to help children with ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can affect children's learning and social skills, and also family functioning. Medication, behaviour modification, home and classroom strategies and sometimes counseling can all help children with ADHD at home and at school.

Verbal instructions

- Keep instructions brief and clear.
- Say the child's name or tap them on the shoulder to make and keep eye contact when giving important information.
- Ask your child to repeat the instruction to make sure they have taken it in and understood.
- Your child may need prompting, monitoring and encouragement to keep them focused on tasks.

Written work

- Highlight important points in written information using *asterisks*, CAPITAL LETTERS or **bold**.
- Limit the amount of information that needs to be copied from a black or white board. Instead, give hand out sheets with this information.

Other learning strategies

- One to one instruction as often as possible.
- A class 'buddy', who gets along well with the child, can be helpful to reinforce instructions and directions.
- Make sure activities have plenty of 'hands on'.
- Schedule the most important learning to the child's best concentration time(s). This is usually mornings.
- Give a checklist for what the child needs to do.
- Physical environment
 - Sit them near the front of the classroom.
 - Plan seating and furniture carefully to decrease distractions. For example, sit the child near classmates who will be good role models.
 - A quiet place, without clutter is important for homework.

Reducing over-activity and fatigue

- Build rest-breaks into activities. For example 5 minutes break for each 30 minutes activity.
- Alternate academic tasks with brief physical exercise. For example the child could do structured tasks or errands such as delivering notes or taking lunch orders.

- Prepare a number of low–pressure fun activities for when the child needs to spend a few minutes calming down.

Keeping structure

Children with ADHD can struggle with changes to routine and need to know what to expect. The following strategies can help:

- Have a fixed routine.
- Keep classroom activities well organised and predictable.
- Display the daily schedule and classroom rules. For example attach a flowchart to the inside of the child's desk or book.
- Tell the child in advance (whenever possible) of a change in the schedule.
- Give the child advance warning of changes. For example: 'in five minutes you will have to put your work away', and remind them more than once.
- Keep choices to a minimum.

Self–esteem

- Encourage the child to take part in activities where they will experience success.
- Set achievable goals.
- Acknowledge their achievements by congratulating them verbally and in written ways such as notes or certificates.
- Focus their attention on the good parts of their written work. For example use a highlighter pen on the best sections of the child's work.
- Help them feel important in the classroom for example acknowledging their effort to do a task even if they don't succeed.
- Near the end of the day, review with the child their accomplishment/s for the day.
- Attend to learning difficulties as soon as possible to restore self–confidence.

Social skills

- Involve the child in smaller groups of no more than 2 other children whenever possible, instead of larger groups.
- Reward appropriate behaviour such as sharing and cooperating.
- Teach the child appropriate responses when they feel provoked. For example teach them to walk away or talk to the teacher.
- Encourage the child to join activities where 'supervised socialisation' is available, such as scouts / girl guides or sporting groups.
- Talk with the child about the consequences of their actions upon them self and others.
- Use visual prompts to remind the child to think before they act. For example, 'STOP, THINK, DO'.

Communication between home and school

- Use a school–home daily communication book.
- Communicate both positive aspects of day and inappropriate behaviour.

- Teachers – be sensitive to parents' feelings – they have the difficult task of raising a child with ADHD.
- Teachers – help parents feel proud of their child – finding positive things to share with them about their child on a regular basis. This can be done in front of the child.

To help to encourage the child to complete homework parents can:

- Make work environment attractive but not too distracting.
- Have regular scheduled time for home work.

Key points to remember

- Acknowledge and reward achievements and positive behaviour often.
- Attend to learning difficulties as soon as possible.
- A quiet place, without clutter is important for homework.
- Talk with the child about the consequences of their actions.
- Medication, positive parenting strategies, school support and counselling can help most children with ADHD and their families.

For more information

- **Support Group**

ACTIVE Inc., Victoria

Tel: (03) 9650–2570

- **Factsheets:**

ADHD – An overview

ADHD – Stimulant medication

Fishoils

- You and your ADD child, Ian Wallace, Harper Collins 1996
- ADHD: The Facts, Mark Selikowitz, Oxford University Press 2004
- Understanding ADHD, Green C. & Chee K., Doubleday, Sydney 2001

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Disclaimer: The information contained on the site is intended to support not replace discussion with your doctor or health care professionals. The authors accept no responsibility for any inaccuracies, information perceived as misleading, or the success of any treatment regimen detailed in the handouts.

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