

Children and young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Advice and support pack

This guide is intended as an introduction for parents whose child has recently been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A diagnosis of ADHD can help you understand why there are difficulties and what can be done to meet those challenges and support your child. Friends, family and anyone working alongside a child with ADHD will also find this guide useful.

This guide provides a general overview of ADHD and explains some characteristics that people with ADHD have.

It also provides some strategies you can implement at home to help you and your child. This information should be used alongside information from the healthcare professionals involved in your child's care.

This advice and support pack has been created by professionals working in the Child Development Centre (CDC) with the collaboration of professionals working in the paediatric department of Dorset County Hospital, psychologists, parent and carer forums, and the 'development and behaviour pathway' group.

We felt it important to collaborate with adults and young people with ADHD. This was achieved by consulting with Parent Carers Together and Dorset Parent Carer Council, the official parent and carer forums, to gain access to ADHD voices and to ensure the pack includes the important information local special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) families need to know during the early stages of their child's diagnosis.

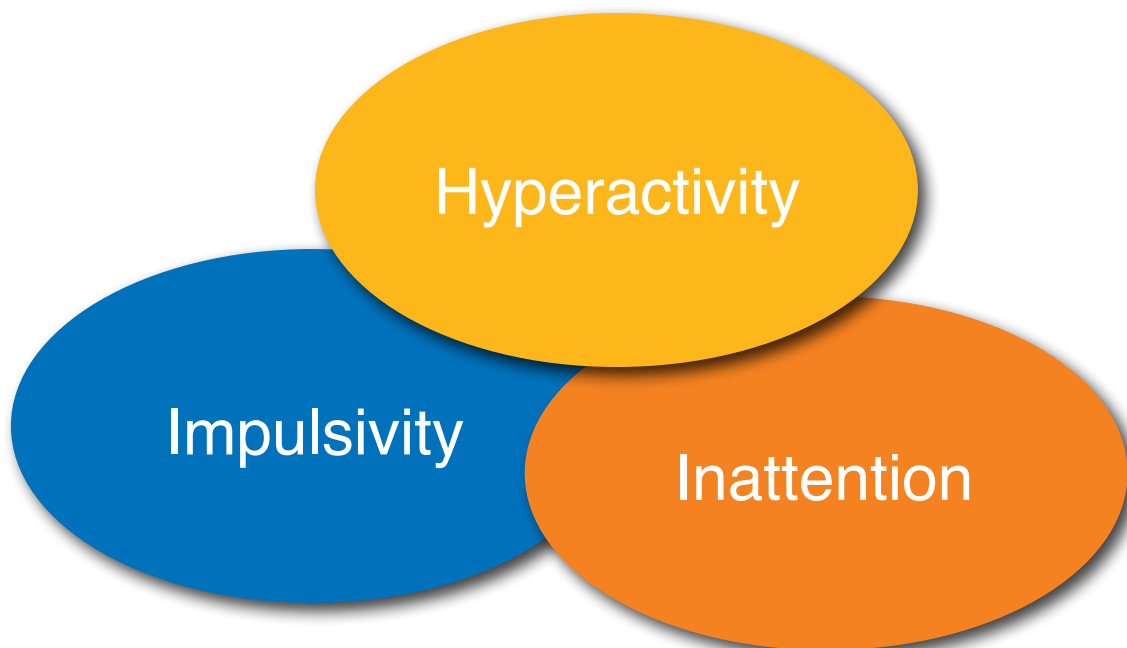
Many forum members' children have been assessed by the CDC, making their experiences, advice, and contributions, valuable.

Contents

Characteristics of ADHD	5
Management of ADHD	8
Parenting courses	9
Safety	11
Support strategies	12
Listening	13
Communication	14
Daily special time	15
Self-esteem	16
Techniques and strategies	18
Staying healthy	20
Self-care	21
Medication	22
Benefits	23
Resources - websites and support	24-27

Characteristics of ADHD

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that impacts the parts of the brain that help us plan, prioritise, focus on, and execute tasks. These are also known as executive function skills. People with ADHD may have difficulty organising thoughts or activities, prioritising tasks, managing time efficiently, making decisions, completing tasks, or meeting deadlines. They may often misplace and lose things, or become overwhelmed by big projects. It is estimated that around 4% of children in the UK have ADHD. Every person with ADHD has different strengths and challenges and has their own individual behaviour patterns. Symptoms and intensity vary; however, ADHD is characterised by impulsivity, inattention and hyperactivity. Your child may experience some or all of these:



Main signs of inattentiveness:

- having a short attention span and being easily distracted
- making careless mistakes
- appearing forgetful or losing things
- difficulty sticking to tasks that are tedious or time-consuming
- appearing to have difficulty listening to or carrying out instructions
- constantly changing activity or task

Main signs of hyperactivity and impulsiveness:

- difficulty sitting still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings
- constantly fidgeting
- difficulty concentrating on tasks
- excessive physical movement
- excessive talking
- difficulty waiting their turn, blurts out answers
- acting without thinking
- difficulty regulating their emotions
- interrupting conversations
- little or no sense of danger

Strengths of ADHD:

Your child may also experience all or some of these:



Management of ADHD

ADHD is a life-long condition that requires on-going management. It is important that all the adults who look after your child (parents, relatives, babysitters, schools and other care givers) work together using consistent techniques to support your child. By putting the necessary support and adaptations in place, developing their strengths and structuring their environments, children with ADHD can achieve their goals.

As a parent, learning about ADHD will help you understand and manage the ways it affects your child and family on a day to day basis. It is important to remember your child is not behaving badly on purpose. By understanding ADHD, you can help create home and school environments that improve your child's chances for success and decrease the impact of ADHD.

There are some examples of books and websites you may find helpful, listed at the end of this pack. Some of these are aimed at children, which can help them learn about ADHD and how it affects them.

Parenting courses

Parenting courses offer support to help address behaviours that challenge and to support your child with ADHD to succeed at school, at home and in relationships. Recommending parent courses does not imply bad parenting. The aim is to help parents optimise their skills to meet the increased parenting needs of their child with ADHD. Parents/carers can learn techniques to help improve their child's self-control, behaviour and self-esteem which can have lasting benefits for the child and family. Many parents benefit from the support they get from meeting other parents living with a child with ADHD. Children with ADHD may have difficulty making friends and maintaining friendships because of their hyperactive, impulsive, or aggressive behaviours. Parenting courses can help you learn how to assist your child to work cooperatively with others and make friends.

Action for Children - Dorset Services run 'The Incredible Years group programme for parents of children aged 6 to 12 with a diagnosis of ADHD' which lasts 18 weeks. Please see their website for more details and if you are interested in attending a parenting programme, please complete their referral form.

<https://services.actionforchildren.org.uk/dorset-services/referrals/parenting-support>

Individual work with a coach or therapist may be needed with more challenging behaviours. For example, cognitive behavioural therapy and/or social skills training for children which target social skills with peers, problem solving, self-control, listening skills and expressing and managing feelings. These services are not provided by the CDC.

For information on a range of general parenting courses for parents of children aged 0-16 please see

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/get-help-for-your-family/parenting-support-courses

<https://fid.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/family-information-directory/information/family-hubs/programme-details-and-early-help-family-support/programme-support-for-parents-carers-and-young-adults>

Safety

A child with ADHD may have difficulty processing information and making decisions around risks, or may act impulsively, meaning they can get hurt more easily.

It is important to be mindful of their safety around:

- traffic
- swimming pools, rivers and lakes
- tools such as lawn mowers
- medicines, cleaning supplies or poisonous chemicals

Often making changes to the environment around the child can be the most effective way to reduce risks e.g. ensuring certain things are locked away or kept out of reach, or having additional adult support if taking the child to an environment where you are aware of potential risks.

Support strategies

It is recommended you work with your child to formulate and implement support strategies at home and at school. You could use the information from your child's ADHD assessments, including recommendations by professionals to find out what strategies your child finds helpful and what does not work for them. Arrange a meeting with your child's teacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) to develop an appropriate and effective program that supports them, making reasonable adjustments and adaptations to the classroom environment to assist and support your child in school. It helps if staff working with your child understand ADHD and are aware of their diagnosis.

Communicate regularly and adopt a collaborative attitude when working with your child's school. Let their teacher know about any major changes at home, as this can affect your child's behaviour in school. Ask teachers to contact you with any concerns before they become a problem.

Open communication with school will help your child. Ongoing monitoring of your child's interventions and support in place at school is required. Become your child's advocate, represent and protect your child's best interests in school situations.

Listening

ADHD can affect listening skills. For some children with ADHD, listening and getting all the required information can be challenging. If your child is easily distracted, or 'zones out', their mind wanders elsewhere and they may not absorb or process the information being given to them. They may have issues with their working memory (the ability to hold things in mind long enough to make use of them) which can make tasks such as spelling and mental maths difficult. They may have a hyperactive brain or impulsive urges to interrupt conversations. These all impact their ability to develop listening skills and make it difficult for them to process information.

Communication

Below are some tips you can use when communicating with your child. This can help them understand what is expected of them.



Make sure you have their attention, use their name to gain their attention, make eye contact.

Give short, clear, concise instructions.



Ask them to repeat back instructions to check their understanding. They could write down notes to refer to.

Tell your child what you want them to do
E.g. 'Put the toys in the box please'
Rather than 'stop leaving the toys on the floor!'.



Use visual timetables and prompts to help them stay on task. Gently remind them what you want them to do if they become distracted.

Break down tasks into small manageable chunks, giving short movement breaks between tasks.



Plan for any transition times.
Prepare them for what is going to happen using visuals, as they may not retain this information.

Daily special time

Your child with ADHD is likely to find day to day life more challenging than most of their peers. It is important to acknowledge their difficulties and let them know you love and support them unconditionally. Your child's self-esteem can be eroded by constant negative feedback. Remember your child is not behaving badly on purpose. Setting aside daily special time for you and your child can help improve their self-worth. This could be playing a game, having an outing, or just a positive interaction together. (See Five Minute Mum for ideas.)

<https://fiveminutemum.com> Five minute fun activities, including tips, tricks and advice.

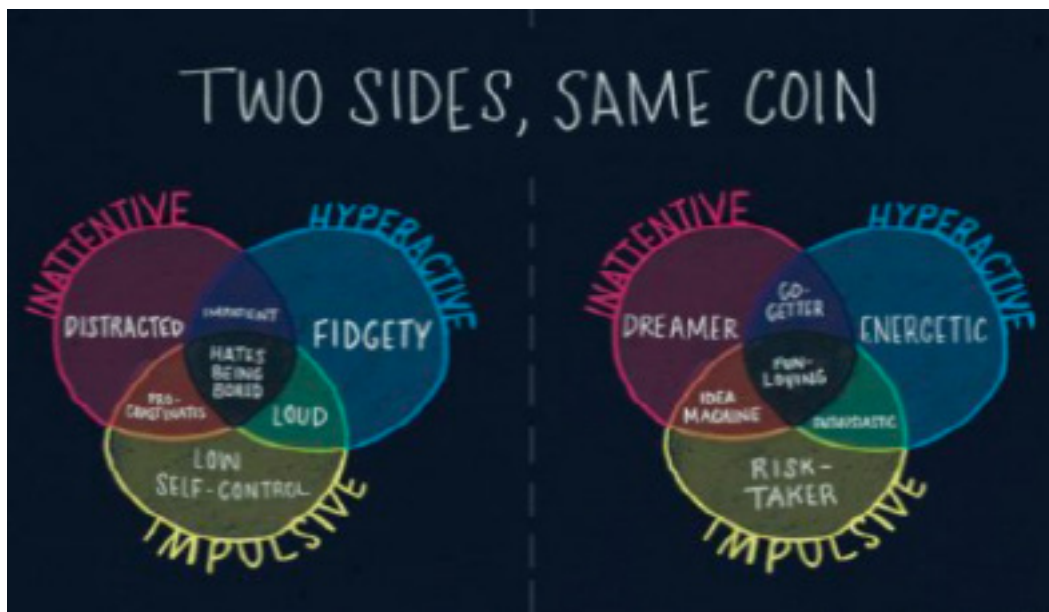
Self-esteem

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves and how confident we feel in who we are. Having negative perceptions of ourselves can lead to low self-esteem. Many children and young people (CYP) with ADHD suffer from low self-esteem for a variety of reasons.

Parents can help to strengthen a child's self-esteem using the 5C's of parenting:

- **Self-control:** learn to manage your own feelings first so you can act effectively and teach your child to do the same.
- **Compassion:** meet your child where they are, not where you expect them to be.
- **Collaboration:** work together with your child and co-parent to find solutions to daily challenges instead of imposing your rules on them.
- **Consistency:** do what you say you will do - over and over and over again.
- **Celebration:** acknowledge and validate their successes and efforts and do more of what's working. Create opportunities for success!

It is important to help your CYP recognise their strengths and value their skills, and help them see the positive side to having ADHD.



(adhddd.com @danidonovan)

Techniques and strategies

Each child is individual, but some other techniques and strategies which may be helpful at home and at school include:

1. providing frequent positive feedback to boost self-confidence and motivate them.
2. changing the pace, task and activities and, where possible, include hands-on activities. E.g. if trying to work on a homework task, try and break this down into chunks. See 'Five Minute Mum' for ideas (details in websites and resources section below).
3. using tangible and non-tangible rewards, for example praise.
4. reducing background noises and distractions and sit them close to the teacher or with positive role models. Avoid obvious distractions like sitting next to a window or door.
5. offering the child a chance to move, especially if they are becoming very fidgety. E.g. giving them a job to do that gets them moving, either in the classroom or at home.
6. allowing a calming down period before coming into class, emphasising the difference between in class and out of class mood. Breakfast club is sometimes helpful to settle in these children for a school day.
7. allowing them to fiddle with any agreed object, for example a stress ball or twiddle toy.

8. planning a timeout facility, encouraging them to realise when this is necessary.
9. allowing exercise and physical activity, providing opportunities to leave the classroom to stretch their limbs regularly.
10. giving them small, achievable jobs, which may require activity and give them a sense of responsibility.
11. consistently praising or rewarding positive/appropriate behaviour.
12. setting consistent boundaries with a clear explanation.
13. being consistent, planning, preparing, and having set routines.
14. using lists and pictures to help your child manage tasks at home e.g. a visual timetable of getting ready for school in the morning and the order of tasks which they can tick off once done. Reward them immediately upon completion.
15. encouraging them to wait for their turn to speak. In class, encourage them to raise their hand or use non-verbal cues to let the other person know they want to speak.
16. avoiding confrontations - learn what triggers difficult behaviour and plan to avoid these situations.
17. finding activities your child can succeed in so they can feel good about themselves.
18. identifying your child's strengths and building on these.
19. ignoring unwanted behaviour or removing your child from the situation or using distraction techniques. Discuss their behaviour at another time when you are both calm.

Staying healthy

Like everyone else, CYP with ADHD need to look after their general wellbeing and mental wellbeing. This includes:

- having a balanced diet with healthy foods
- maintaining a healthy weight
- engaging in 60 minutes of physical activity every day - this does not need to be all at once
- getting enough quality sleep as lack of sleep can affect mood and behaviour
- connecting with others, such as spending quality time with friends or family
- doing things that make them happy, such as enjoying a favourite hobby or learning a new skill
- recognising unhelpful thoughts and taking steps to think about things differently

Self-care

Living with someone who has ADHD can be exhausting and challenging. It is important to look after yourself. When you make time for yourself, rest and exercise, you will be able to do more for yourself and others around you. Self-care doesn't need to take up a huge chunk of your day.

Here are some self-care ideas you could try:



Go on a walk

Do some sport

Chat to a friend

Do an activity you enjoy

Practice some breathing exercises

Having a break from caring for your child is not an admission of failure or saying you don't care. Without any breaks, you risk becoming unwell or exhausted. Make time for the things you enjoy doing. Looking after yourself is an ongoing practice in building resilience and preventing burnout. If you notice your own mental health deteriorating, seek support from your GP.

Medication

In some cases, medication can be effective in decreasing symptoms of ADHD by helping children with ADHD have less hyperactivity, be less impulsive, improve concentration and be less distracted. Some parents may wish to discuss medication options with their child's clinician. The medication is prescribed by a paediatrician or child psychiatrist, following thorough assessment. It requires regular monitoring to check for improvement and avoid any side effects. Medication is usually only recommended after behaviour strategies and environmental modifications have been tried.

Benefits

Some children with ADHD need substantially more care or supervision than other children of the same age that don't have ADHD. Their day to day life may be significantly affected and impacted by their condition. There may be benefits available to help meet the extra costs parents/carers have as a result of their child's condition. For more information please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or welfare rights unit to carry out a full benefits check for you.

Websites and resources

Books for parents and children to aid understanding of ADHD:

Understanding ADHD

by Christopher Green and Dr Kit Chee

Step by step help for children with ADHD, a self-help manual for parents

by Anne Weeks, Cathy Laver-Bradbury, David Daley, and Margaret Thompson

Teenagers with ADD, ADHD and Executive Function Deficits:

A Guide for Parents and Professionals by Chris Dendy

Putting on the Brakes: Young People's Guide to Understanding ADHD

by Patricia Quinn and Judith Stern

ADHD (The facts) by Mark Selikowitz

1-2-3- Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2 to 12

by Dr Thomas Phelan PhD

Can I tell you about ADHD by Susan Yarney

My Doctor says I have ADHD, A child's journey by Dr C R Yemula

All dogs have ADHD by Kathy Hoopmann

A Dragon with ADHD by Steve Herman (My Dragon books on many topics)

Five Minute Mum by Daisy Upton

Useful websites:

<https://fiveminutemum.com>

Five minute fun activities to do with 1-7 year olds. Includes tips, tricks and advice.

www.adhdandyou.co.uk

Explains ADHD and offers practical tips for helping at home and school

www.ukadhd.com

Top tips for parents and carers, 10 minute YouTube videos

www.chadd.org

Understanding ADHD

www.adhddd.com

by Dani Donovan who uses personal stories to illustrate her struggles, experiences and feelings to expose the invisible workings of her brain.

www.adhdvoices.com

Short videos to explain ADHD and other things that can help

www.adders.org

Tips for parenting

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk

Resource Hub e.g. ADHD booklet for children, how to support daily routines

www.addiss.co.uk

Provides support to people with ADHD and their parents. See website for email and phone hotline. Online 123 magic courses for parents of children and teenagers with ADHD. See 1-2-3 Magic Parenting - ADHD in Barnet (adhdbarnet.org.uk).

www.youngminds.org.uk

Parents helpline and web chat

www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-defecit-hyperacrivity-disorder-adhd

www.sibs.org.uk/info-and-advice/learn-about-conditions/adhd

Podcasts on ADHD

Adhd.smarterparenting.com

The ADHD Smarter Parenting's Podcast

www.ACAMH.org/podcasts

ADHD a young person's guide. For children and their families.

Family Information Service

The Family Information Service can help you with a range of matters relating to family life. The service is free, confidential and impartial. The team helps families with children and young people aged 0 to 19 or 0 to 25 for children and young people with SEND. The team and the Family Information Directory can provide information on local childcare, services and activities, and much more. For example:

The Remix:

<https://activateperformingarts.org.uk/project/the-remix-and-premix>

Artz+ and Sportz+:

www.dorsetcarershub.com/post/artz-and-sportz-information-parents---carers

Email: leisureWDWP@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Tel: 01305 252266

Dorset Youth:

<https://dorsetyouth.com>

For more youth groups and activities visit:

BCP:

<https://fid.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/welcome-to-the-fis>

<https://fid.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/family-information-directory/directory>

Phone: **01202 093131**

Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and 9am to 4.30pm on Fridays

Email: **familyinformation@bcpcouncil.gov.uk**

Dorset:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/get-help-for-your-family/family-information-service>

<https://familyinformationdirectory.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/kb5/dorset/fsd/home.page>

Phone: **01305 221066**

Email: **familyinfo@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

SEND local offer

In the SEND local offer you can find information and signposting to help children, young people and their parents and carers get the right help and support to meet their needs. For example, you can find details of parent support groups, youth groups and activities through the SEND local offer websites.

For example, to find out about the Max Card, a national discount card enabling children with additional needs to benefit from reduced or free entry to many UK attractions and days out, please see your local council's SEND local offer under activities and short breaks, activity discount schemes, Max Card.

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council SEND local offer provides information, advice and support for children and young people living in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole aged 0-25 years with SEND and their families.

<https://fid.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/send-local-offer>

Dorset Council SEND local offer provides information, advice and support for children and young people living in the rest of Dorset aged 0-25 years with SEND and their families.

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/sen-and-disability-local-offer/dorsets-local-offer

SENDIASS - Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service

SENDIASS offers free, confidential, accurate and impartial advice, guidance and information to children and young people (up to the age of 25) with SEND, and their parents/carers.

SENDIASS provide information, advice and support with relation to education, social and healthcare matters.

BCP Sendiass:

Phone: **01202 128181**

Email: **help@sendiass4bcp.org**

www.sendiass4bcp.org

Dorset Sendiass:

Phone: **01305 595477**

Email: **dorset.sendiass@family-action.org.uk**

www.dorsetsendiass.co.uk

Parent carer forums

The following parent carer forums were set up to represent the voices of parents/carers of children and young people (0-25 years) with SEND. By working together, their aim is to improve services for, and make sure the services meet the needs of, children and young people with SEND in Dorset. Please see their websites for further details.

Parent Carers Together - BCP:

www.parentcarerstogether.org.uk

Dorset Parent Carer Council:

www.dorsetparentcarercouncil.co.uk

Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

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