

Does My Child Have ADHD?

Many parents worry about this question. The answer comes from children, families, teachers, and doctors working together as a team. Watching your child's behavior at home and in the community is very important to help answer this question. Your doctor will ask you to fill out rating scales about your child. Watching your child's behavior and talking with other adults in the child's life will be important for filling out the forms.

Here are a few tips about what you can do to help answer the question:

Watch your child closely during activities where he or she should pay attention.

- Doing homework
- Doing chores
- During storytelling or reading

Watch your child when you expect him or her to sit for a while or think before acting.

- Sitting through a family meal
- During a religious service
- Crossing the street
- Being frustrated
- With brothers or sisters
- While you are on the phone

Pay attention to how the environment affects your child's behavior. Make changes at home to improve your child's behavior.

- Ensure that your child understands what is expected. Speak slowly to your child. Have your child repeat the instructions.
- Turn off the TV or computer games during meals and homework. Also, close the curtains if it will help your child pay attention to what he or she needs to be doing.
- Provide structure to home life, such as regular mealtimes and bedtime. Write down the schedule and put it where the entire family can see it. Stick to the schedule.
- Provide your child with planned breaks during long assignments.
- Give rewards for paying attention and sitting, not just for getting things right and finishing. Some rewards might be: dessert for sitting through a meal, outdoor play for finishing homework, and praise for talking through problems.
- Try to find out what things set off problem behaviors. See if you can eliminate the triggers.

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If your child spends time in 2 households, compare observations.

- Consult your child's other parent about behavior in that home. Cooperation between parents in this area really helps the child.
- If the child behaves differently, consider differences in the environment that may explain the difference in behavior. Differences are common and not a mark of good or bad parenting.

Talk to your child's teacher.

- Learn about your child's behavior at school. Talk about how your child does during academic lessons and also during play with other children.
- Compare your child's behavior in subjects he or she likes and those in which he or she has trouble with the work.
- Determine how the environment at school affects your child's behavior. When does your child perform well? What events trigger problem behaviors?
- Consider with the teacher whether your child's learning abilities should be evaluated at school. If he or she has poor grades in all subjects or in just a few subjects or requires extra time and effort to learn material, then a learning evaluation may be valuable.

Gather impressions from other adult caregivers who know your child well.

- Scout leaders or religious instructors who see your child during structured activities and during play with other children
- Relatives or neighbors who spend time with your child
- Determine how other environments affect your child's behavior. When does your child perform well? What events trigger problem behaviors?

Make an appointment to see your child's doctor.

- Let the receptionist know you are concerned that your child might have ADHD.
- If possible, arrange a visit when both parents can attend.

Adapted from materials by Heidi Feldman, MD, PhD

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General Tips

1. Rules should be clear and brief. Your child should know exactly what you expect from him or her.
2. Give your child chores. This will give him or her a sense of responsibility and boost self-esteem.
3. Short lists of tasks are excellent to help a child remember.
4. Routines are extremely important for children with ADHD. Set up regular times for meals, homework, TV, getting up, and going to bed. Follow through on the schedule!
5. Identify what your child is good at doing (like art, math, computer skills) and build on it.
6. Tell your child that you love and support him or her unconditionally.
7. Catch your child being good and give immediate positive feedback.

Common Daily Problems

It is very hard to get my child ready for school in the morning.

- Create a consistent and predictable schedule for rising and getting ready in the morning.
- Set up a routine so that your child can predict the order of events. Put this routine in writing or in pictures on a poster for your child. Schedule example:
Alarm goes off → Brush teeth → Wash face → Get dressed → Eat breakfast → Take medication → Get on school bus
- Reward and praise your child! This will motivate your child to succeed. Even if your child does not succeed in all parts of the “morning routine,” use praise to reward your child when he or she is successful. Progress is often made in a series of small steps!
- If your child is on medication, try waking your child up 30 to 45 minutes before the usual wake time and give him or her the medication immediately. Then allow your child to “rest” in bed for the next 30 minutes. This rest period will allow the medication to begin working and your child will be better able to participate in the morning routine.

My child is very irritable in the late afternoon/early evening.
(Common side effect of stimulant medications)

- The late afternoon and evening is often a very stressful time for all children in all families because parents and children have had to “hold it all together” at work and at school.
- If your child is on medication, your child may also be experiencing “rebound”—the time when your child’s medication is wearing off and ADHD symptoms may reappear.
- Adjust your child’s dosing schedule so that the medication is not wearing off during a time of “high demand” (for example, when homework or chores are usually being done).

- Create a period of “downtime” when your child can do calm activities like listen to music, take a bath, read, etc.
- Alternatively, let your child “blow off extra energy and tension” by doing some physical exercise.
- Talk to your child’s doctor about giving your child a smaller dose of medication in the late afternoon. This is called a “stepped down” dose and helps a child transition off of medication in the evening.

My child is losing weight or not eating enough.
(Common side effects of stimulant medication use)

- Encourage breakfast with calorie-dense foods.
- Give the morning dose of medication after your child has already eaten breakfast. Afternoon doses should also be given after lunch.
- Provide your child with nutritious after-school and bedtime snacks that are high in protein and in complex carbohydrates. Examples: Nutrition/protein bars, shakes/drinks made with protein powder, liquid meals.
- Get eating started with any highly preferred food before giving other foods.
- Consider shifting dinner to a time later in the evening when your child’s medication has worn off. Alternatively, allow your child to “graze” in the evening on healthy snacks, as he or she may be hungriest right before bed.
- Follow your child’s height and weight with careful measurements at your child’s doctor’s office and talk to your child’s doctor.

Homework Tips

- Establish a routine and schedule for homework (a specific time and place.) Don’t allow your child to wait until the evening to get started.
- Limit distractions in the home during homework hours (reducing unnecessary noise, activity, and phone calls, and turning off the TV).
- Praise and compliment your child when he or she puts forth good effort and completes tasks. In a supportive, noncritical manner, it is appropriate and helpful to assist in pointing out and making some corrections of errors on the homework.
- It is not your responsibility to correct all of your child’s errors on homework or make him or her complete and turn in a perfect paper.
- Remind your child to do homework and offer incentives: “When you finish your homework, you can watch TV or play a game.”
- If your child struggles with reading, help by reading the material together or reading it to your son or daughter.
- Work a certain amount of time and then stop working on homework.

“Common Daily Problems” adapted from material developed by Laurel K. Leslie, MD, San Diego ADHD Project.

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For Parents of Children With ADHD

- Many parents find it very difficult to help their own child with schoolwork. Find someone who can. Consider hiring a tutor! Often a junior or senior high school student is ideal, depending on the need and age of your child.
- Change or rotate rewards frequently to maintain a high interest level.
- Punish behavior, not the child. If your child misbehaves, try alternatives like allowing natural consequences, withdrawing yourself from the conflict, or giving your child a choice.

Discipline

- Be firm. Set rules and keep to them.
- Make sure your child understands the rules, so he or she does not feel uninformed.
- Use positive reinforcement. Praise and reward your child for good behavior.

Taking Care of Yourself

- Come to terms with your child's challenges and strengths.
- Seek support from family and friends or professional help such as counseling or support groups.
- Help other family members recognize and understand ADHD.

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Homework Tips for Parents

- **Establish a routine and schedule for homework (a specific time and place)** and adhere to the schedule as closely as possible. Don't allow your child to wait until the evening to get started.
- **Limit distractions** in the home during homework hours (eg, reduce unnecessary noise, activity, and phone calls; turn off the TV).
- **Assist your child in dividing assignments into smaller parts** or segments that are more manageable and less overwhelming.
- **Assist your child in getting started on assignments** (eg, read the directions together, do the first items together, observe as your child does the next problem/item on his or her own). Then get up and leave.
- **Monitor and give feedback without doing all the work together.** You want your child to attempt as much as possible independently.
- **Praise and compliment your child when he or she puts forth good effort and completes tasks.** In a supportive, noncritical manner it is appropriate and helpful to assist in pointing out and making some corrections of errors on the homework.
- **It is not your responsibility to correct all of your child's errors on homework** or make him or her complete and turn in a perfect paper.
- **Remind your child to do homework and offer incentives:** "When you finish your homework, you can..."
- **A contract for a larger incentive/reinforcer may be worked out** as part of a plan to motivate your child to persist and follow through with homework. ("If you have no missing or late homework assignments this next week, you will earn. . .").
- **Let the teacher know your child's frustration and tolerance level in the evening.** The teacher needs to be aware of the amount of time it takes your child to complete tasks and what efforts you are making to help at home.
- **Help your child study for tests.** Study together. Quiz your child in a variety of formats.
- **If your child struggles with reading, help by reading the material together** or reading it to your son or daughter.
- **Work a certain amount of time and then stop working on homework.** Don't force your child to spend an excessive and inappropriate amount of time on homework. If you feel your child worked enough for one night, write a note to the teacher attached to the homework.
- It is very common for students with ADHD to fail to turn in their finished work. It is very frustrating to know your child struggled to do the work, but then never gets credit for having done it. Papers seem to mysteriously vanish off the face of the earth! **Supervise to make sure that completed work leaves the home and is in the notebook/backpack.** You may want to arrange with the teacher a system for collecting the work immediately on arrival at school.
- Many parents find it very difficult to help their own child with schoolwork. Find someone who can. **Consider hiring a tutor!** Often a junior or senior high school student is ideal, depending on the needs and age of your child.
- **Make sure your child has the phone number of a study buddy**—at least one responsible classmate to call for clarification of homework assignments.
- Parents, **the biggest struggle is keeping on top of those dreaded long-range homework assignments** (eg, reports, projects). This is something you will need to be vigilant about. Ask for a copy of the project requirements. Post the list at home and go over it together with your child. Write the due date on a master calendar. Then plan how to break down the project into manageable parts, scheduling steps along the way. Get started AT ONCE with going to the library, gathering resources, beginning the reading, and so forth.

Adapted from Rief S. *The ADD/ADHD Book of Lists*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers; 2002

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How to Establish a School-Home Daily Report Card

1. Select the Areas for Improvement.

- Discuss the child's behavior with all school staff who work with the child.
- Determine the child's greatest areas of impairment.
- Define goals toward which the child should be working regarding the areas of impairment.
- Key domains:
 - Improving peer relations
 - Improving academic work
 - Improving classroom rule-following and relationships with adults

2. Determine How the Goals Will Be Defined.

- Identify specific behaviors ("target behaviors") that can be changed to make progress toward the goals easier.
- Target behaviors must be meaningful and clearly defined/observed/counted by teacher and child.
- Examples of target behaviors in the key domains:
 - Improving peer relations: does not interrupt other children during their work time, does not tease other children, plays without fighting at recess
 - Improving academic work: has materials and assignments necessary to do tasks, completes assigned academic tasks, is accurate on assigned tasks, completes and returns homework
 - Improving classroom rule-following and relationships with adults: obeys the teacher when commands are given, does not talk back to the teacher, follows classroom rules
- Additional target behaviors are listed on the attached sheet, Sample Report Card Targets.

3. Decide on Behaviors and Criteria for the Daily Report Card.

- Estimate how often the child is doing the target behaviors by reviewing school records and/or observation.
- Determine which behaviors need to be included on the report.
- Evaluate target behaviors several times throughout the day.
- Set a reasonable criterion for each target behavior (a criterion is a target level the child will have to meet to receive a positive mark for that behavior). Set criteria to be met for each part of the day, not the overall day (eg, "interrupts fewer than 2 times in each class period" rather than "interrupts fewer than 12 times per day").

4. Explain the Daily Report Card to the Child.

- Meet with teacher, parents, and child.
- Explain all aspects of the Daily Report Card (DRC) to the child in a positive manner.

5. Establish a Home-based Reward System.

- Rewards must be selected by the child.
- Arrange awards so that:
 - Fewer or less preferred rewards can be earned for fewer yeses.
 - More desired rewards can be earned for better performance.
- Give the child a menu of rewards (see Sample Home and School Rewards):
 - Select rewards for each level.
 - Label the different levels with child-appropriate names (eg, One-Star Day, Two-Star Day).
 - Use the Weekly Daily Report Card Chart to track weekly performance.
 - Some children need more immediate rewards than the end-of-day home rewards—in such cases, in-school rewards can be used.

6. Monitor and Modify the Programs.

- Record daily the number of yeses the child received on each target.
- Once the child has regularly begun to meet the criterion, make the criteria harder (if the child is regularly failing to meet the criterion, make the criteria easier).
- Once the criterion for a target is at an acceptable level and the child is consistently reaching it, drop that target behavior from the DRC. (Let the child know why it was dropped and replace with another target if necessary.)
- Move to a weekly report/reward system if the child is doing so well that daily reports are no longer necessary.
- The report card can be stopped when the child is functioning within an appropriate range within the classroom, and reinstated if problems begin to occur again.

7. Troubleshooting a Daily Report Card.

- If the system is not working to change the child's behavior, examine the program and change where appropriate (see Troubleshooting a Daily Report Card).

8. Consider Other Treatments.

- If, after troubleshooting and modification, the DRC is not resulting in maximal improvement, consider additional behavioral components (eg, more frequent praise, time-out) and/or more powerful or intensive behavioral procedures (eg, a point system).

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How to Establish a School-Home Daily Report Card

Troubleshooting a Daily Report Card

Problem	Solution
Is the child taking the Daily Report Card (DRC) home?	Ensure that the child has a backpack or special folder in which to carry DRC. Have the teacher for last class of the day prompt the child to take DRC home. Assume the child received a negative report if he or she does not have DRC. Implement positive consequences for bringing home DRC.
Are the target behaviors appropriate? Are the target behaviors clearly defined for the child? Are the target behaviors socially valid? Can the target behaviors be reasonably attained in the classroom context?	Redefine the target behaviors for the child. Modify the target behaviors. Modify the target behaviors or class context (eg, "gets along with peers" should not be a target if the class structure does not provide the opportunity for peer interactions).
Does the child remember the target behaviors throughout the day?	Implement a system of visual prompts (eg, put task sheet on desk).
Are the criteria for success realistic (eg, not too high or too low relative to baseline)?	Modify the criteria to shape the behavior.
Is something interfering with the child's reaching the criteria (eg, child does not complete assignments due to messy, disorganized desk)?	Work on removing the impediment (eg, work on improving organizational skills, modify class schedule or structure).
Does the child understand the system? Can the child accurately describe the target behaviors and criteria for positive evaluations? Can the child accurately describe the relationship between the criteria and the rewards?	Implement a system of visual prompts, if necessary. Review system with child until child can accurately describe system. Increase frequency of reviewing if child continues to have difficulty. Explain the DRC system to the child again. Simplify the DRC system if necessary.
Is the monitoring system working properly? Have the target behaviors been sufficiently clearly defined that the teacher can monitor and evaluate them? Is the monitoring and recording process efficient enough so that the teacher is doing it accurately and consistently?	Modify the definitions of the target behaviors. Provide visual or auditory prompts for recording. Simplify the monitoring or recording process.
Can the child accurately monitor his or her progress throughout the day?	Design and implement a monitoring system that includes a recording form for the child (may include visual or auditory prompts).
Is the child receiving sufficient feedback so that he or she knows where he or she stands regarding the criteria?	Modify the teacher's procedures for providing feedback to the child (eg, provide visual prompts; increase immediacy, frequency, or contingent nature of feedback).
Is the home-based reward system working properly? Are the home-based rewards motivating for the child? Has it been ensured the child does not receive the reward noncontingently? Are the parents delivering the rewards reliably? Can the child delay gratification long enough for home-based rewards to be effective?	Change the home-based rewards (eg, increase the number of choices on menu, change the hierarchy of rewards). Review reward procedures with parents again and ensure that reward is provided only when the child has earned it. Modify the procedures for delivering the home-based rewards (eg, visual prompts) or the nature of the home-based rewards. Design and implement procedures for providing school-based rewards.

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How to Establish a School-Home Daily Report Card

Daily Home Report Card

Circle Y (Yes) or N (No)

Child's Name _____ Medication _____ Week/Month _____ / _____

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
2. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
3. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
4. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
5. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
6. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
7. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Total number of Yeses							
Total number of Nos							

Comments:

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How to Establish a School-Home Daily Report Card

Daily School Report Card

Circle Y (Yes) or N (No)

Child's Name _____ Medication _____ Today's Date _____

	Subjects/Times						
1. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
2. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
3. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
4. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
5. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
6. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
7. _____	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Teacher's Initials							
Total number of Yeses							
Total number of Nos							

Comments:

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Sample Report Card Targets

Academic Productivity

- Completes X assignments within the specified time
- Completes X assignments with X% accuracy
- Starts work with X or fewer reminders
- Leaves appropriate spaces between words X% of the time or assignment
- Writes legibly/uses 1-line cross outs instead of scribbles/writes on the lines of the paper
- Corrects assignments appropriately*
- Turns in assignments appropriately*

Following Classroom Rules

- Follows class/school rules with X or fewer violations
- Interrupts class less than X times per period/Works quietly with X or fewer reminders/Makes X or fewer inappropriate noises
- Follows directions with X or fewer repetitions
- Stays on task with X or fewer reminders
- Sits appropriately* in assigned area with X or fewer reminders
- Raises hand to speak with X or fewer reminders
- Uses materials or possessions appropriately*
- Has XX or fewer instances of stealing
- Has XX or fewer instances of cursing
- Has XX or fewer instances of complaining/crying/whining
- Has XX or fewer instances of lying
- Has XX or fewer instances of destroying property

Peer Relationships

- Shares/helps peers when appropriate with X or fewer reminders
- Ignores negative behavior of others/Child shows no observable response to negative behavior of others
- Teases peers X or fewer times per period
- Fewer than X fights with peers
- Speaks clearly (fewer than X prompts for mumbling)
- Contributes to discussion (answers X questions orally)
- Contributes to discussion (at least X unprompted, relevant, nonredundant contributions)
- Fewer than X negative self comments
- Minds own business with XX or fewer reminders
- Needs XX or fewer reminders to stop bossing peers
- Does not bother other children during seat work (fewer than X complaints from others)

Teacher Relationships

- Accepts feedback appropriately* (no more than X arguments/X% of arguments) following feedback

- Appropriately* asks an adult for help when needed
- Maintains appropriate* eye contact when talking to an adult with X/fewer than X prompts to maintain eye contact
- Respects adults (talks back fewer than X times per period)
- Complies with X% of teacher commands/requests/Fewer than X noncompliances per period

Behavior Outside the Classroom

- Follows rules at lunch/recess/free time/gym/specials/assemblies/bathroom/in hallway with X or fewer rule violations
- Walks in line appropriately*/Follows transition rules with X or fewer violations
- Follows rules of the bus with X or fewer violations
- Needs XX or fewer warnings for exhibiting bad table manners (eg, playing with food, chewing with mouth open, throwing trash on the floor)
- Changes into gym clothes/school clothes within X:XX minutes

Time-out Behavior

- Serves time-outs appropriately*
- Child serves a time-out without engaging in inappropriate behaviors
- While serving a time-out, the child exhibits no more than X instances of negative behavior

Responsibility for Belongings

- Brings DRC to teacher for feedback before leaving for the next class/activity
- Responsible for own belongings (has belongings at appropriate* times according to the checklist/chart**)
- Has materials necessary for class/subject area
- Organizes materials and possessions according to checklist/chart**
- Morning routine completed according to checklist/chart**
- End of day routine completed appropriately according to checklist/chart**
- Brings supplies to class with XX or fewer reminders/brings supplies to class according to checklist/chart**
- Hangs up jacket/backpack with XX or fewer reminders
- Takes lunchtime pill with X or fewer reminders
- Has only materials needed for the assignment on desk

Homework

- Brings completed homework to class
- Writes homework in assignment book with X or fewer reminders
- DRC is returned signed the next day by parent
- Has all needed materials for homework in backpack at the end of the day

*"Appropriately" must always be defined by teacher for child.

**Checklist/chart must accompany target behavior and be displayed for child.

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How to Establish a School-Home Daily Report Card

Sample Home Rewards

Daily Rewards

Snacks
Dessert after dinner
Staying up X minutes beyond bedtime
Having a bedtime story/Reading with a parent for X minutes
Choosing a radio station in car
Extra bathtub time for X minutes
Educational games on computer for X minutes
Choosing family TV show
Talking on phone to friend (local call)
Video game time for X minutes
Playing outside for X minutes
Television time for X minutes
Listening to radio/stereo for X minutes
Other as suggested by child

Daily or Weekly Rewards

Going over to a friend's house to play
Having a friend come over to play
Allowance
Bike riding/skating/scooter/skateboarding (in neighborhood for daily reward; longer trip with family or at bike trail/skate park for weekly reward)
Special activity with mom or dad
Special time with mom or dad for X minutes
Earn day off from chores
Game of choice with parent/family
Other as suggested by child

Weekly Rewards

Making a long-distance call to relatives or friends
Going to the video arcade at the mall
Going fishing
Going shopping/going to the mall
Going to the movies
Going to the park
Getting ice cream
Bowling, miniature golf/Selecting something special at the store
Making popcorn
Having friend over to spend night
Going to friend's to spend night
Choosing family movie
Renting movie video
Going to a fast-food restaurant with parent and/or family
Watching taped TV shows
Free time for X minutes
Other as suggested by child

Notes: Older children could save over weeks to get a monthly (or longer) reward as long as visuals (eg, pieces of picture of activity) are used; eg, camping trip with parent, trip to baseball game, purchase of a video game. Rewards for an individual child need to be established as a menu. Children may make multiple choices from the menu for higher levels of reward, or may choose a longer period of time for a given reward.

Sample School Rewards*

Talk to best friend
Listen to tape player (with headphones)
Read a book
Help clean up classroom
Clean the erasers
Wash the chalkboard
Be teacher's helper
Eat lunch outside on a nice day
Extra time at recess
Write on chalkboard
Use magic markers
Draw a picture
Choose book to read to the class
Read to a friend
Read with a friend
Care for class animals
Play "teacher"
See a movie/filmstrip
Decorate bulletin board
Be messenger for office
Grade papers
Have treats
Earn class party
Class field trip
Student of the Day/Month
Pop popcorn
Be a line leader
Visit the janitor
Use the computer
Make ice cream sundaes
Teach a classmate
Choose stickers
Take a good note home
Receive a positive phone call
Give lots of praise
Hide a special note in desk
Choose seat for specific time
Play card games
Receive award certificate
Take Polaroid pictures
Draw from "grab bag"
Eat at a special table
Visit the principal

*Sample School Rewards can be added to the home-based reward system especially if a child is not responding appropriately to the Home Rewards. Teachers need to make sure that a child wants and will work for one of these School Rewards.

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Why Is My Child Having Trouble in School?

It is very common for children with ADHD to have difficulties in school. These problems can occur for several reasons:

- Symptoms of ADHD like **distractibility and hyperactivity** make it hard for children with ADHD to pay attention or stay focused on their work, even though they may be capable learners and bright enough to understand the material.
- Many children with ADHD also have **trouble organizing** themselves, breaking an assignment down into smaller steps, and staying on a schedule.
- Some children with ADHD have **difficulty with self-control** and get into trouble with peers and/or teachers.
- Many children with ADHD also have **a learning disability**. Schools usually define a learning disability as a discrepancy between a child's IQ score and his or her performance on achievement tests. A child with a learning disability has difficulty understanding information he or she sees or hears OR trouble putting together information from different parts of the brain.
- Children with ADHD often **can learn material but it may take longer** and require more repetition.
- Children with ADHD often show **inconsistency in their work** because of their ADHD; one day they may know information and the next day they cannot seem to remember it.

Typical School Performance Difficulties Associated With ADHD

- Poor organization and study skills
- Weaknesses in written language/writing skills
- Minimal/inconsistent production and output (both in-class assignments and homework)
- Behavior that interferes with learning and impacts on interpersonal relationships
- Immature social skills

What Can I Personally Do to Help?

There are many different ways that a parent's participation can make a difference in a child's school experience, including:

- **Spending time** in the classroom, if your work schedule allows, and observing your child's behavior.
- **Talking with your child's teacher** to identify where your child is having the most problems.
- Working with your child's teacher to make a **plan** for how you will address these problems and what strategies at school and home will help your child be successful at learning and completing work.
- **Acknowledging the extra efforts your child's teacher** may have to make to help your child.

- **Reading all you can about ADHD** and sharing it with your child's teacher and other school officials.
- **Becoming an expert on ADHD and your child.**
- **Finding out about tutoring options** through your child's school or local community groups. Children with ADHD may take longer to learn material compared with other children even though they are just as smart. Tutoring may help your child master new materials.
- **Making sure your child actually has mastered** new material presented so that he or she does not get behind academically.
- **Acknowledging how much harder** it is for your child to get organized, stay on task, complete assignments, and learn material compared with other children. Help your child to get organized, break tasks down into smaller pieces, and expend his or her excess physical energy in ways that are "okay" at home and in the classroom.
- **Praising your child** and rewarding him or her for a job well done immediately after completing tasks or homework.
- **Joining a support group** for parents of children with ADHD or learning disabilities. Other parents may help you with ideas to help your child.

Another good way to get help from your school is to **determine if your school has a regular education process that helps teachers with students who are having learning or behavioral problems that the teacher has been unsuccessful in solving**. The process differs in various school districts and even among different schools in the same district. Some of the names this process may go by include Student Study Team (SST), Instructional Support Team (IST), Pupil Assistance Team (PAT), Student Intervention Team (SIT), or Teacher Assistance Team (TAT).

Parents are encouraged to request a meeting on their child to discuss concerns and create a plan of action to address their child's needs. In addition to the child's teacher, members of the team may include the child, the parents, a mentor teacher or other teachers, the principal, the school nurse, the resource specialist, a speech and language specialist, or a counselor or psychologist. The team members meet to discuss the child's strengths and weaknesses, the child's progress in his or her current placement, and the kinds of problems the child is having. The team members "brainstorm" to develop a plan of action that documents the kinds of interventions that will help the child, the timeline for the changes to take place, and the school staff responsible for the implementation of the team's recommendations.

The team should also come up with a plan to monitor the child's progress. A follow-up meeting should be scheduled within a reasonable time frame (usually 4 to 6 weeks) to determine whether the team's interventions are actually helping the child in the areas of difficulty.

Adapted from material developed by Laurel K. Leslie, MD, San Diego ADHD Project.

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ADHD Information

About Our Kids

http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/about_adhd.html

ADDitude Magazine for People With ADHD

<http://www.additudemag.com>

ADDvance Online Resource for Women and Girls With ADHD

<http://www.addvance.com>

American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)

<http://www.aafp.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

<http://www.aap.org>

American Medical Association (AMA)

<http://www.ama-assn.org>

Attention-Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)

<http://www.add.org>

Attention Research Update Newsletter

<http://www.helpforadd.com>

Bright Futures

<http://www.brightfutures.org>

Center for Mental Health Services Knowledge Exchange Network

<http://www.mentalhealth.org>

Children and Adults With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

<http://www.chadd.org>

Comprehensive Treatment for Attention-Deficit Disorder (CTADD)

<http://www.ctadd.com>

Curry School of Education (University of Virginia) ADD Resources

<http://teis.virginia.edu/go/cise/ose/categories/add.html>

Intermountain Health Care

<http://www.ihc.com/xp/ihc/physician/clinicalprograms/primarycare/adhd.xml>

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)

<http://nccam.nih.gov>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/adhdmenu.cfm>

Northern County Psychiatric Associates

<http://www.ncpamd.com/adhd.htm>

One ADD Place

<http://www.oneaddplace.com>

Pediatric Development and Behavior

<http://www.dbpeds.org>

San Diego ADHD Web Page

<http://www.sandiegoadhd.com>

Vanderbilt Child Development Center

<http://peds.mc.vanderbilt.edu/cdc/rating~1.html>

Educational Resources

American Association of People With Disabilities (AAPD)

<http://www.aapd.com>

Consortium for Citizens With Disabilities

<http://www.c-c-d.org>

Council for Learning Disabilities

<http://www.cldinternational.org>

Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)

<http://ericir.syr.edu>

Federal Resource Center for Special Education

<http://www.dssc.org/frc>

Internet Resource for Special Children

<http://www.irsc.org>

Learning Disabilities Association of America

<http://www.ldanatl.org>

National Information Center for Children and Youth With Disabilities (NICHCY)

<http://www.nichcy.org>

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center

<http://www.pacer.org>

SAMSHSA

<http://www.disabilitydirect.gov>

SandraRief.com

<http://sandrarium.com>

TeachingLD

<http://www.dldcec.org>

US Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov>

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NICHQ

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What Can I Do When My Child Has Problems With Sleep?

Many children with ADHD have difficulty sleeping at night, whether or not they are on medication. This is partially related to the ADHD; parents often describe their children as being “on the go” and collapsing late at night. It may also be due to the fact that stimulant medication has worn off, making it more difficult for them to manage their behavior. Lastly, some children have difficulty falling asleep because the stimulants affect them the same way caffeine affects adults.

Here are a few tips:

- **Develop bedtime rituals/routines.**
 - A bedtime ritual is a powerful sign that it is time to sleep. It needs to be simple so the child can “re-create” the ritual even if the parent is not present.
 - Try writing out the bedtime ritual to make it consistent.
- **Pay attention to the sleep environment.**
 - Background noises, location, sleep partners, bedding, favorite toys, and lighting can all affect a child’s ability to fall asleep.
 - A cool, dark, quiet room is best.
- **Letting children cry themselves to sleep is not recommended.**
 - Teach them to soothe themselves, such as giving the child a special blanket, a picture of the parent(s), or a stuffed animal to hold while falling asleep.
 - Avoid activities that depend on a parent’s presence, including rocking or holding the child until he or she falls asleep.
- **Make the bedroom a sleep-only zone.**
 - Remove most toys, games, televisions, computers, and radios from your child’s bedroom if your child is having trouble falling asleep or is often up at night.
 - One or two stuffed animals are acceptable.
- **Limit time in bed.**
 - Hours spent awake in bed interfere with good sleep patterns; the goal is to make the child’s bed a place for sleeping only.
 - Be aware of how much sleep children need at different ages. Even though adults need about 8 hours of sleep, infants and toddlers often sleep more than 12 hours and children usually sleep 10 hours. Teenagers also need lots of sleep, sometimes requiring 9 hours or more.
- **Establish consistent waking times.**
 - Bedtimes and waking times should be the same 7 days a week.
 - It is easier to enforce a waking time than a bedtime.
- **Avoid drinks with caffeine.**
 - Caffeine is present in a wide range of beverages, such as tea, soda, cocoa, and coffee. Drinking these beverages past the afternoon may make it more difficult for your child to settle down to sleep.
- **Establish daytime routines.**
 - Regular mealtimes and activity times, including playtime with parents, also help set sleep times.
- **Chart your child’s progress.**
 - Praise your child for successful quiet nights.
 - Consider marking successful nights on a star chart and providing rewards at the end of the week.
- **Waking up at night is a habit.**
 - Social contact with parents, feeding, and availability of interesting toys encourage the child to be up late, so set limits on attention-getting behaviors at night.
- **Consider medical problems.**
 - Allergy, asthma, or conditions that cause pain can disrupt sleep. If your child snores loudly and/or pauses in breathing, talk to your doctor.
- **Try medications to help your child sleep only under the care of your child’s doctor.**
 - Medications need to be used very carefully in young children. Many medications can have complications and make sleep worse.
 - Some children with ADHD may actually be helped by a small dose of a stimulant medication at bedtime. Paradoxically, this dose may help a child to get organized for sleep.
 - Some children may ultimately need other bedtime medications—at least for a little while—to help improve sleep. Talk with your doctor before starting any over-the-counter or prescription medications.

Adapted from material developed by Laurel K. Leslie, MD, San Diego ADHD Project, and from material developed by Henry L. Shapiro, MD, FAAP, for the Pediatric Development and Behavior Web site (www.dbpeds.org).

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