



What should I know about ADHD?

ADHD affects the way the brain works. Several areas are impacted, including a child's ability to learn, set and meet goals, short and long-term memory, motor activity and attention.

- People are born with ADHD.
- External factors such structure, sleep schedule, diet and support across multiple settings impact a child's ability to manage ADHD.
- ADHD affects all social classes, ethnic groups and countries.
- To qualify for an ADHD diagnosis, symptoms must be present by age 12.

Signs and Symptoms:

Attention-Deficit

- Lacking ability to pay attention to detail
- Making careless mistakes
- Appearing to not listen or follow directions
- Difficulty prioritizing tasks or interests
- Avoiding/disliking tasks requiring sustained focus and attention (this may not include video games)
- Losing things frequently
- Lacking organization, which impacts daily functioning
- Easily forgetting routines and tasks

Hyperactivity/Impulsivity

- Fidgeting, tapping or constantly making noises with hands
- Squirming or difficulty staying seated
- Running/climbing excessively
- Difficulty playing quietly
- Often "on the go"
- Talking excessively
- Blurting out answers before question is completed or when they have not been called on
- Extreme emotional reaction (i.e., not able to control their emotions)
- Interrupting others

How do I manage my child's symptoms of ADHD?

Youth with ADHD respond best to rewards. They may be internally motivated but have difficulty controlling their emotions, attention and behavior. Here are some ways to help youth with ADHD remain productive and successful. Also, remember that you may have to try a few different strategies to find the one that works best for your child.



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Structured routines

- Use color-coded folders to keep track of school assignments.
- Use a calendar or planner to track due dates, other responsibilities and activities.
- Schedule a time to reorganize and clean out folders and book bags (the end of the week is ideal).
- Create daily or weekly routines to complete chores.

Rewards and positive reinforcement

- Choice as a reward helps children build their decision making skills. This should occur consistently throughout the week and multiple times a day. Example: “If you decide to take a pause from your video games to wash the dishes and put them away then we will go and get ice cream.”
- Provide a lot of immediate praise. Be simple but specific. Example: “Thank you for stopping your game and washing the dishes. I am really proud of you for putting them away so quickly!”
- Create a home and school behavior tracking and reward system.
- Use “if, then” statements. For example, tell them if they do what is expected, then they will be rewarded or can do something they want to do.
- Use small rewards to reinforce desired behavior. Rewards don’t have to be tangible. They can be an activity or extra play time.
- When possible, make tasks your child doesn’t like doing fun and add some competition. Example: During your morning time routine, make up a song about getting up and getting dressed. Use a timer to see how quickly they can get dressed! They can work on beating their time and receive a reward if they stay within the allotted time.
- Catch your child displaying desired behaviors. Pay attention to the behavior you want to see and ignore undesirable behaviors.

Consistency and communication

- Reduce the number of directions or provide written directions instead.
- Break tasks down into multiple steps, providing as little information as needed for your child to carry out the immediate task. Example: Instead of, “Clean your room,” say, “Please get your clothes off of the floor and put them in the laundry basket. Put your shoes in the closet.”
- Identify shared goals for home and school. Example: Completing homework assignments. A joint plan will include a role for parents to track homework and reward completion and submission. A role for school staff will include ensuring student has the homework assignment and tracking submission. Both the teacher and parent will help the student maintain their organization system.
- Provide verbal redirection, rather than long explanations. Example: “You still have three shirts on the floor. Please turn off the video game until you have picked them up.”
- Provide corrective feedback. Be simple and brief while avoiding humiliation. Example: “Actually, your shirts belong inside the laundry basket, not on the side. Please pick them up and put them in the basket.”
- Use the child’s personal interests to engage them, especially to complete tasks they don’t like doing. Example: If your child enjoys playing basketball allow them to throw their clothing in the laundry basket as if they’re playing basketball.

Nationwide Children’s Hospital has school-based therapists in your school. If you have a student who can benefit from these services, contact the school counselor or school social worker, or call Nationwide Children’s Behavioral Health Intake Department at (614) 355-8080.

Learn more at [NationwideChildrens.org/Care-Connection](https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/Care-Connection).



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