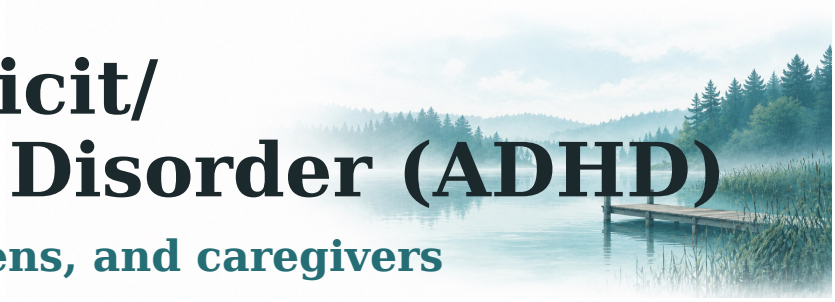
Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



A guide for children, teens, and caregivers

ADHD is a developmental condition that affects attention, activity level, and impulse control. A child may struggle to finish tasks, wait, or stay organized even when trying hard. Symptoms begin in childhood and affect daily life. Assessment brings together information from home and school.

Understanding ADHD

Common symptoms
Trouble focusing or following steps; lost items or unfinished tasks; fidgeting or restlessness; interrupting, struggling to wait, or acting without thinking ahead.

A child may have attention difficulties, hyperactivity, or both. ADHD is more than an occasional difficult day.

Why does it happen?
Genes play an important role. Other influences on brain development also matter. ADHD is not caused by a lack of effort or poor parenting.

General education. Follow the care plan agreed with your healthcare professional.

Treatment and outlook

Set practical goals with your child, their clinician, and teachers.

Under 6: Parent training in behavior management comes first: caregivers practice clear instructions, praise, and consistent responses. A clinician may consider medicine at ages 4-5 if serious difficulties persist despite this support.

Ages 6-11: Usually combine an approved ADHD medicine with parent training and/or classroom behavioral support.

Ages 12-17: Involve the teen in medication decisions and include suitable behavioral, organizational, and school supports.

Medicines can help attention; behavioral treatment builds skills. Follow-up checks benefits, side effects, and growth. Not every child needs medicine.

Treatment can improve daily life. Goals and support may change as your child grows; ADHD can continue into adulthood.

Learn more about ADHD

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Living with ADHD

Practical steps between appointments



Home and school

Make routines clear. Use visual reminders, brief instructions, and advance notice of changes. Keep homework supplies together; divide tasks into small steps with breaks.

Build confidence. Positive reinforcement means following helpful behavior with praise or a reward. Praise effort and progress; keep expectations consistent.

Work together. Share feedback with teachers. Ask about fewer distractions, movement breaks, and organizational tools. A 504 plan provides access supports; an Individualized Education Program (IEP) includes special education. School evaluation determines eligibility.

Support health. Make time for sleep, physical activity, and balanced meals. These support well-being but do not replace treatment. Check with the clinician before trying supplements or restrictive diets.

Medicines and getting help

Report side effects. Report appetite or weight changes, poor sleep, stomach upset, headaches, sleepiness, dizziness, or mood changes. Follow-up checks growth, blood pressure, and pulse as appropriate.

Use medicines safely. Never share; store securely. Ask before changing doses; do not abruptly stop guanfacine or clonidine. Extended-release stimulants are not approved under age 6 and have greater risks, including weight loss.

Seek urgent medical advice for new hallucinations (seeing or hearing things others do not) or severe mood changes. Chest pain, unexplained fainting, or breathing trouble need immediate medical care.

Get urgent help. For suicidal thoughts or a mental health crisis, call **988** or text **988** in the US. Call **911** for immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency. Children and teens: tell a trusted adult right away.

For your next appointment

Bring home and school examples, side effects, and missed doses. Ask: Are we meeting our goals? Could sleep, anxiety, or learning difficulties matter? What needs adjusting? Needing a change is not a failure.

Learn more about ADHD

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