

Understanding ADHD

ADHD



A guide for teenagers



Topics


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This booklet has been developed to help you understand more about ADHD symptoms and how ADHD is diagnosed. It cannot, however, take the place of talking to your doctor. If you have any questions or would like more information, please consult your doctor.



Everyone with ADHD is different - you can find out more about ADHD on **page 6**.

Understanding ADHD

What is ADHD?

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

If you have ADHD, you might:

- ✓ Not always pay attention when you should
- ✓ Find it hard to keep organised
- ✓ Have trouble focusing and keep getting distracted
- ✓ Not be able to keep still as well as others
- ✓ Find it hard to wait your turn
- ✓ Interrupt others a lot



What ADHD is not³⁻⁷

ADHD is not bad behaviour:

In fact, it has been shown that different parts of the brain don't completely 'connect' with each other in young people with ADHD, not in the same way as other people.

ADHD is not the same as a learning disorder:

Even though it may affect school performance, ADHD is not the same as a learning disorder. If you have ADHD, you are just as intelligent as other people.



What causes ADHD?^{4,5,9-12}

We don't know exactly why people have ADHD, but these are some possible causes.

- ADHD may be caused by changes in how parts of the brain 'connect' to each other. This may affect how you think and act.
- You are more likely to have ADHD if a parent, brother or sister has it. But that doesn't mean you will definitely have it.

What does ADHD look like?^{1,2}

On the next page is a list of symptoms. These are things that you may have trouble with, like paying attention and/or sitting still. Everyone with ADHD is different and may have different symptoms.

What are your symptoms?¹

Read through the list on the next page. As you read each one, tick the box if you think it describes you.



Things I often do because I have trouble paying attention¹

- ☐ Don't pay close attention to details, or make careless mistakes on schoolwork or during other activities
- ☐ Find it difficult to keep paying attention during tasks or activities
- ☐ Don't listen when I'm spoken to
- ☐ Don't follow through on instructions, and don't finish schoolwork, jobs or other duties
- ☐ Find it difficult to organise tasks and activities
- ☐ Avoid or don't like tasks that require concentrating for long periods of time
- ☐ Lose things, like school items or books
- ☐ Am easily distracted by things going on around me or by unrelated thoughts
- ☐ Am forgetful in daily activities

Things I often do because it is hard to stay still¹

- ☐ Fidget with or tap my hands or feet, or squirm in my seat
- ☐ Leave my seat when I should stay seated
- ☐ Feel restless; run around or climb in situations where it is inappropriate
- ☐ Am unable to be quiet when playing, reading or doing hobbies
- ☐ Am on the go, like I'm being driven by a motor
- ☐ Talk excessively
- ☐ Blur out an answer before a question has been finished
- ☐ Find it difficult to wait my turn
- ☐ Interrupt or intrude on others

How was my ADHD diagnosed?¹

To find out if you have ADHD, your doctor would have examined and spoken to you, and those close to you, to find out:

1. Which symptoms you have
2. How long you have had them
3. How often you have them
4. How much they bother you
5. If your symptoms could be caused by anything other than ADHD

After asking all these questions, your doctor most likely decided you have ADHD because:

- ✓ Over the past 6 months, you have had at least 6 symptoms from either one of the lists on page 7
- ✓ Your symptoms started before you were 12 years old
- ✓ You have symptoms in at least two places, like at home and at school
- ✓ Your symptoms cause a lot of problems for you
- ✓ Your symptoms are not being caused by something other than ADHD



Managing ADHD^{13,14}

Who can help me with my ADHD?

You don't have to deal with your ADHD by yourself. In fact, you will probably have a few people around you who may be able to help.

**Your
parents**

**Your
teachers**

**Your
doctor and
specialist**



Will I need to take medicine?^{3,13}

Medicine may be an important part of managing your ADHD. ADHD medicine is not a cure, but it may make it easier for you to pay attention and be less active when you're supposed to be. Medicine may not be appropriate for everyone.

- It may take some time for your doctor to figure out which medicine to give you and how much of it works best for you.
- Talk with your parents and doctor if you have any questions about your medicine.
- If your doctor prescribes you medicine, it is important that you take it as prescribed.
- Do not give your medicine to anyone else.





Are there other options besides medicine?^{13,14}

Whether you take medicine or not, there are other therapies to help manage your ADHD symptoms. You may use all of these therapies or just some of them. Your doctor and parents will work with you to decide which therapies are best for you.

Educational management

Educational management can help you stop behaviour that may be causing problems, and help you learn new and better ways to behave. For example, you might learn how to organise your things at home and how to follow the rules in your classroom. Your doctor, parents and teacher can all help.

Learning how to deal with different situations

A doctor can help you learn how to:

- Get along better with your family, friends and teachers
- Reach a goal
- Solve problems
- Get organised
- Follow directions
- Finish your homework
- Finish tasks at school



What should I tell my teacher?^{8,14,15}

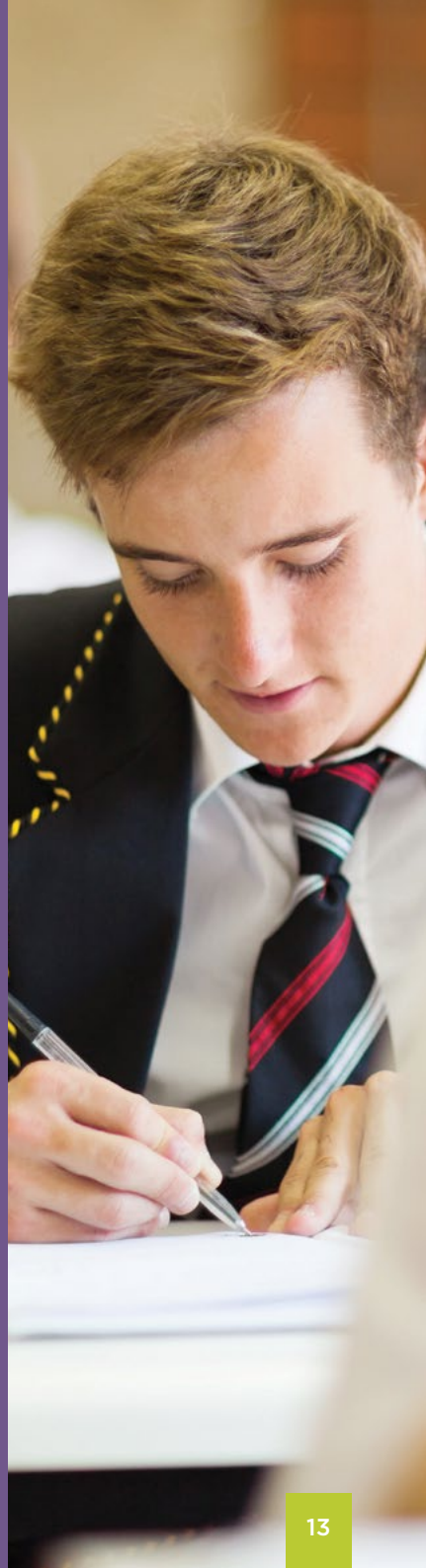
You and your parents should decide if you want to tell your teacher about your ADHD. If you decide this is okay, you can tell your teacher about things that you have trouble with in class. Then you, your teacher and your parents can make a plan to help you do better.

How can I do better at school?^{15,16}

You may have trouble focusing on what you are doing. It can be even harder to focus in school because there is so much noise and activity all around you. If you are having this problem, tell your parents. Your school might be able to do things to help, like giving you a quiet place to study and take tests.

What might help me at school?^{3,14}

- Try to be proactive by taking a few minutes every evening to plan for the next day. Get your items such as books, clothes, keys, school papers and medication ready, pack your bag the night before, or do anything else that will prevent rushed chaos the next morning.
- Talk to your parents and teachers, and set a plan on how to organise your school work. Communicate with them on what would work for you.
- Make a daily 'to do' list of important tasks and priorities, and keep it with you at all times. Make additional copies in case you lose it.
- Practice using your mobile, school diary or calendar to record appointments.
- Keep a notepad close by to document important thoughts and ideas that pop into your head that you want to remember.
- Try splitting large tasks into a series of smaller and easier steps.
- Consider using a colour-coded file system or desk organiser to improve organisation and structure in your life.
- Think about having multiple sets of keys made so losing them is not a disaster.
- Talk with your parents about how to reward yourself for successes in meeting your goals.



What if I have questions about my ADHD?

- Your family and doctor are there to help you manage your symptoms.
- It's your choice to decide if you want to tell anyone, and who you want to talk to about your ADHD.
- If you need to talk, ask people to listen closely and tell them what's wrong.
- You should ask your doctor and parents for help to discuss this important choice.
- Use the notes space on the next page to write down any questions or concerns you have, and bring them up with your doctor.

What can I do right now?

Here are some ideas for things you can do now that may help with your ADHD symptoms.

Make a daily plan

Ask your family to help you make a daily 'to do' list of important tasks and priorities, and keep it with you at all times.

Tell someone when you are having problems

Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Make sure you talk to your doctor if you have any questions or for more information on how to help with your ADHD.



NOTES



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