



Dear Parent,

This packet includes a few very helpful handouts about ADHD from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Also included is information about 504 plans and IEPs as well as sample letters to request consideration for a 504 plan or an IEP from your school district.

Checklist for Documents to be Returned to our Office:

Parent: Complete these documents through the portal:

☐ Vanderbilt Assessment Scale, Follow-up: Parent

Teacher: Print out and ask teacher(s) to complete and return via mail/fax OR email PDF folder to the teacher, teacher returns it to you as an email and send it back to us through the portal:

☐ Vanderbilt Assessment Scale, Follow-up: Teacher

When we receive all the completed papers requested above, the information will be reviewed and sent to your child's Primary Care Physician. The findings will be discussed at your child's next med check appointment or you will receive a phone call/portal message.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Genesis Pediatrics

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PARENT TOOLS



ADHD

ADHD Basic Facts: What Every Parent Should Know Before Starting a Child on Medication



General Information

Studies have shown that medication is effective in treating the symptoms of ADHD alone or in combination with behavioral interventions. There are several types of medications, and they are grouped into 2 major categories: stimulants and non-stimulant medications. Most children are initially treated with stimulants, although there are reasons why your doctor may choose to treat your child with a non-stimulant. Deciding which medication is right for your child may take time. Your doctor may try several different doses or switch to different medications to find the best choice. Discuss any family history of heart disease, high blood pressure, or substance use with your doctor.

Stimulant medications usually work within 15 to 90 minutes, depending on dose and formulation. Stimulant medications come in short-acting preparations that need to be given 2 or 3 times per day and long-acting preparations that are given only once a day. Although the medications are similar, each child may experience different benefits and side effects with different medications.

Stimulant medications should be given at the same time of the day, and you should never give 2 doses at the same time to make up for a missed dose. Non-stimulant medications may take up to 2 or 3 weeks before a beneficial effect is seen.

Side Effects

There are several side effects that can be associated with stimulant medications. These include stomachache, headache, decreased appetite, sleep problems, and increased symptoms as the medication wears off (known as rebound). Preschool children may also experience emotional outbursts, repetitive behaviors or thoughts, or irritability. Usually these effects are mild and often decrease after the first 1 to 2 weeks. Your doctor will adjust medications or discuss other strategies at follow-up visits if these side effects continue. It is helpful to observe the time of day when side effects occur. Serious side effects are rare, but you should contact your doctor's office if your child experiences dizziness, fainting, severe irritability, tics, or serious behavioral changes.

Follow-up

Currently, there is no way to know which medication will be best for any particular child. To make sure that your child is receiving the dosage that gives the best effect with the least amount of side effects, your doctor will need to start at a low dose and increase the dose until a good effect or fewer side effects are seen. To judge whether the medication is helping, your doctor will obtain completed rating scales of your child's symptoms from you and your child's teachers when your child is at baseline (without medication) and is taking different medication doses. If there is no beneficial effect at the maximum recommended dose, your doctor will usually try another stimulant medication. Approximately 80% to 90% of children will respond to one of the stimulants.

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Setting a Follow-up Plan

Your child will need to be seen frequently during the initial treatment phase. After a satisfactory dose has been found, your child will be scheduled for a follow-up visit at regular intervals, usually every 2 to 3 months.

At follow-up visits, your doctor will review rating scales from you and your child's teachers and will check weight, blood pressure, and emotional status and review any medication side effects.

Parent's follow-up responsibilities include

- Discuss your child's treatment program with appropriate school personnel.
- Bring copies of completed parent and teacher follow-up rating scales to all follow-up visits.
- Schools may be willing to fax completed follow-up rating scales to your doctor's office.
- Inform the doctor before the next scheduled visit if your child is experiencing serious medication side effects.
- Ask your child how he or she feels on the medication.
- Schedule follow-up visits.

Your doctor will set up an anticipated follow-up schedule with you at the time medication is started. They are more frequent, typically weekly at the beginning since there is the need to increase dose until the most effective dose is achieved. There should be a visit within 14 to 30 days after any change in medication and dosage. Once that stabilization occurs, the frequency of routine follow-up stretches out.

Remember: If you have any questions or if you see side effects that cause concern, do not wait for the next scheduled visit. Call and speak with the doctor, and the doctor will arrange an appropriate immediate or interval follow-up.

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The recommendations in this resource do not indicate an exclusive course of treatment or serve as a standard of medical care. Variations, taking into account individual circumstances, may be appropriate. Original resource included as part of *Caring for Children With ADHD: A Practical Resource Toolkit for Clinicians*, 3rd Edition.

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Homework Tips for Parents to Teens



Identifying Where Problems Begin and Solutions for Improvement

- Does your child write the assignments in a planner?
 - If not, work with your child's teacher to check his homework planner to be sure assignments are there before he leaves class.
- Does your child lose his homework planner?
 - Purchase extra ones at the beginning of the school year so that there can be quick replacements.
- Homework is more easily, and more effectively, completed if the routine homework time is while the child's medication is still active, such as during in-school structured study time (study hall) or immediately after school. Depending on after-school activities and athletics, an additional dose of medication can be prescribed to cover evening study.
- Does your child forget to bring home the materials needed to do homework?
 - For elementary school children, develop a behavioral program that rewards children for bringing home the correct materials. Teachers can help a child succeed by reminding him at the end of the day.
 - For middle or high school students, it can be difficult or impossible for parents to know daily what materials should have been brought home. Prioritize the homework routine described in the Strategies for Helping Your Child section later on this page over attempting to manage this.
 - Having a supply of poster board, folders, note cards, and other common school materials can prevent late-night runs to purchase last-minute supplies.
- Does your child have difficulty starting his homework?
 - See the homework routine in the Strategies for Helping Your Child section later on this page.
- Does your child have difficulty staying focused?
 - See the homework routine in the Strategies for Helping Your Child section later on this page.
- Does your child do the homework but forget to turn it in?
 - At the end of homework time, help him organize his notebook and backpack for easy identification of assignments to be turned in.
 - Have your child put the backpack by the front door, ready to go in the morning.
 - Still forgetting? Talk with the teacher about initiating prompts at school to turn in the homework.

Strategies for Helping Your Child

- Make sure your child has the phone number of at least one student in each of her classes to call for clarification of any assignments. Many schools have a homework hotline or an internet site for checking homework assignments. Help teach your child to use them!
- Establish a routine and schedule homework for a specific time and place each day. Choose a quiet location where you can monitor the level of effort. The more predictable and consistent homework time is for a child, the easier it will be to get it done. The best time to do homework is during the coverage time of your child's medication, if possible. If your child has after-school sports or other activities, you may want to speak with your child's doctor about extending medication coverage time in the evening, to cover homework after activities are completed.

Homework Tips for Parents to Teens

Strategies for Helping Your Child (*continued*)

- Establish a minimum amount of time to be spent on schoolwork each day. If your child claims to have nothing to do, find a book or another material (preferably related to a topic she is studying in school) and have her read it and describe what she learned to you.
- Be available for assistance, but do not hover. If you observe your child having difficulty, ask whether you can help. For example, you may notice your child having trouble getting started on an assignment. If your child requests your assistance or accepts your offer to help, you may help your child break down complex instructions into simple steps.
- It is also common for children to need assistance starting long-term assignments. You can help by encouraging them to divide them into smaller steps. Schedule when each step should be started and completed (setting a deadline) in the homework planner. Get started immediately so that the project does not feel too big to ever get done.
- This routine should occur every school day because the real benefit to your child comes with repeated practice over an extended period of time.
- Give praise and rewards for consistent effort and work during these periods. This will help decrease procrastination and teach good work skills.
- Consider using a contract or token system, with your child earning rewards for sticking to the homework routine.
- Do not do your child's homework with or for her. Your job is to provide the structure and feedback, not do the work. If you are always doing the homework with your child, you will be preventing her from learning how to work independently. (Reading together can be very useful and is an exception. It can also be very rewarding to your child.)
- The last activity of homework time should always be having your child clean out the notebook and backpack and organizing the material so that it can easily be found the next day. Consider special folders or color-coded sections for homework. Figure out what will help your child stay organized and have her do it daily.
 - Create a checklist for your child to follow, listing what she needs to bring to school, and place by the front door, ready to go.

Asking for Help

- Know when to ask the teacher for help.
If your child is bringing home incomplete class assignments to do at home, meet with the teacher to request these problems be addressed in school with a behavioral intervention plan. These additional makeup assignments can push a child over the edge at homework time.
- Know when to ask your physician for help. Contact your physician if your child is regularly having major meltdowns at homework time. The timing, duration, and type of medication may need to be reevaluated.
- Know when to get a tutor. Sometimes a neutral person will be far more successful in helping your child learn content than you will be. Many schools have peer tutoring programs that are free.

Derived from materials offered by the Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) Parent to Parent Program and from Rief SF. *The ADD/ADHD Book of Lists*.

Ruth Hughes, PhD, and Beth A. Kaplanek, RN.

Need more information? Contact CHADD at www.chadd.org.

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Why Is My Child Having Trouble in School?



How ADHD Symptoms Can Interfere With School

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

- Symptoms of ADHD such as **distractibility, hyperactivity, and impulsivity** 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, staying on a schedule, and managing their school materials.
- Some children with ADHD have **difficulty with self-control** and get into trouble with peers 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 the child's performance on achievement tests. A child with a learning disability has difficulty understanding information seen or heard or trouble putting together information from different parts of the brain.
- Children with ADHD **can often 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 may not seem to remember it.
- Many children with ADHD have **trouble managing homework challenges** such as
 - Not writing down assignments
 - Not completing classroom assignments
 - Forgetting homework at home
 - Not handing in homework
 - Poor persistence at tasks (follow-through)
 - Needing constant supervision or help with classwork and homework
 - Taking hours to do minutes of work

Typical School Performance Difficulties Associated With ADHD

- Difficulty getting started.
- Poor organization and study skills.
- Difficulty expressing oneself in written and spoken language.
- Difficulty with writing skills.
- Difficulty with sequencing of a complex task and breaking an assignment down into manageable parts to be completed over a course of time, such as a long-term project.
- Difficulty analyzing and problem-solving schoolwork and behavior.
- Behavior that interferes with learning and affects interpersonal relationships.
- Immature social skills.
- Middle school, junior high, and high school become progressively more challenging because students have to deal with multiple teachers and subjects and with having less time with and access to each particular teacher. In addition, each teacher has less time to individualize and meet the needs of each singular student. This is especially true for children and adolescents with ADHD.



Why Is My Child Having Trouble in School?

What You Can Do Personally to Help

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

- **Stay involved with your pediatrician.**
 - Talk with your pediatrician regularly about academic, behavior, and homework problems. Treatment modifications may help.
 - Ask your pediatrician how often he or she would like to have the parent and teacher fill out follow-up rating scales. Set up a system for sending the scales back to your pediatrician.
 - Ask your child's teacher to fill out the teacher follow-up scale in this toolkit, then send a copy of the scale to your treating physician.
- **Start the school year by sending your child's teacher a letter** with strengths, problems, and classroom and management interventions that have worked in the past for your child. If your child has an education plan, send a copy of the plan for your child (Section 504 or Individualized Education Program) to the teacher (teachers in middle school and high school).
- **Ask your child's teacher to fill out a parent contact sheet** that includes information such as name, email address, phone number, best times to contact the teacher, how homework is assigned, procedures for turning in homework, and other classroom policies.
 - Some schools have a school-wide website on which parents can log to retrieve assigned homework and classroom policies and procedures.
- **Talk with your child's teacher** to identify where your child is having the most problems. Set up a regular schedule of communication by phone, email, or notes. Ask for face-to-face meetings early and often.
 - Keep a record of all communication that you have with the teacher and other school staff about issues and discussions regarding your child. Use a binder and place all information and communication dated and in order into it.
- **Work 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.
 - (Sample) Use a school-to-home tracker to assist with communicating how your child is following through with behavior and classroom work. Reward your child for positive progress on the school-to-home tracker.
- **Set up a homework routine** with your child. Identify a space at home to complete homework and a time each day that will be allocated for schoolwork. By the fifth grade, children almost always have assignments to complete and/or material that can be read or studied every day. Set a minimum time each day for schoolwork and stick to that time. If your child claims there is nothing to do, give your child something to read during the time. This practice repeated consistently over time can build very helpful work habits and remove the incentive for "forgetting" to bring schoolwork home.
- **Praise your child** and reward your child for a job well done immediately after completing tasks or homework.
- **Make sure your child has actually mastered** new material so that your child does not get behind academically.
- **Foster your child's strengths.**
 - Incorporate your child's strengths into daily home behavior incentive plans and school educational plans.
 - Review strengths with your child. Help your child see these strengths.
 - Recognize that children with ADHD perform best when the chosen topic is specifically interesting to them or is highly relevant to them ("emotionally important"). For example, in the middle years, to foster reading, there are multiple series of books, such as the older Tom Swift, Hardy Boys, or Nancy Drew or the newer Harry Potter, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Field Trip Mysteries, Secret Series, Wings of Fire, or Land of Stories, as well as topical series such as sports stories. Select one or a set that is age appropriate and that your child is interested in, and it will be more likely to be read and read well.
- **Acknowledge 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 get organized, break tasks down into smaller pieces, and expend excess physical energy in ways that are OK at home and in the classroom.
- **Find 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.
- **Acknowledge the extra efforts your child's teacher** may have to make to help your child.

Why Is My Child Having Trouble in School?



What You Can Do Personally to Help (continued)

- **Spend time** in the classroom and volunteer to help on special occasions if your work schedule allows, and observe your child's behavior.
- **Read all you can about ADHD** and share it with your child's teacher and other school officials.
- **Become an expert on ADHD and your child's individual needs.**
- **Join a support group** for parents of children with ADHD or learning disabilities, such as Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Other parents may offer ideas to help your child.
- **If your child is consistently having problems with academics or behavior in the classroom, write a letter to the principal asking for an evaluation.** The school can then determine whether your child is eligible for special education services. 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, Instructional Support Team, Pupil Assistance Team, Student Intervention Team, or Teacher Assistance Team.

Parents are encouraged to request a meeting about 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 current placement, and the kinds of problems the child is having. 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 4–6 weeks) to determine whether the team's interventions are actually helping the child in the areas of difficulty.

Derived from Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders Parent to Parent: Family Training on ADHD and material developed by Laurel K. Leslie, MD, MPH, San Diego ADHD Project.

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