



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN

Cork/Kerry Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
(CAMHS)

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ADHD: a guide for children

The image shows the letters 'ADHD' written in a large, dark blue, cursive font on a yellow background with horizontal blue lines. A thick, dark brown horizontal line is drawn below the letters.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

This booklet is designed for parents/guardians to read with your child. Lots of children with ADHD think that they are “bold”, but having a diagnosis can help them to understand that their behaviour isn’t their fault. Encourage them to ask questions, emphasise that ADHD is just one aspect of them, and that they have lots of strengths and talents.

What is ADHD?

Having ADHD means you have difficulty with some of the following:

Hyperactivity



You may find it hard to sit still in class and may have lots of energy. You may feel restless and fidgety. You may also talk more than your friends do.

Inattention



At times you may find it hard to listen to the teacher and follow instructions. You may find it hard to start or finish work without reminders. You may find that you get distracted easily in the classroom by things that are going on around you. At home you may get distracted when you are doing your homework or doing other activities that require you to concentrate.

Impulsivity



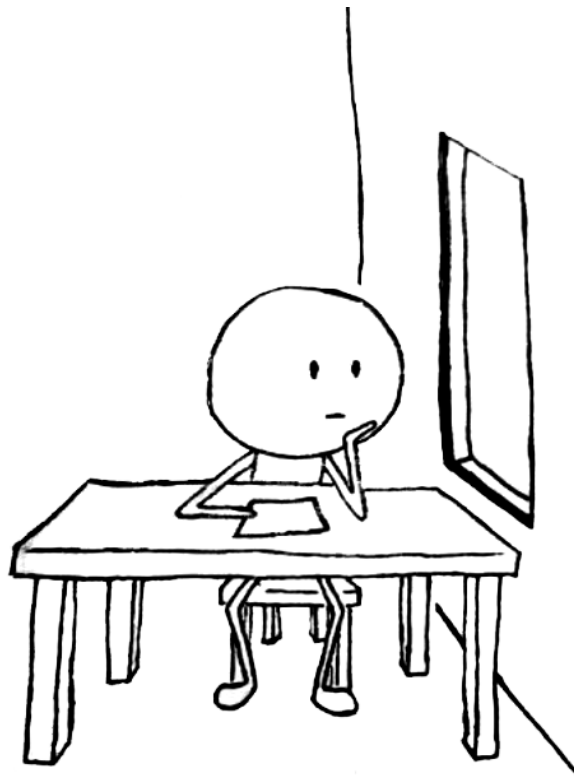
You may find that you get in trouble for interrupting or blurting out answers before questions have been completed. You may be impatient and find it hard to wait your turn or wait in line. You might do or say things without thinking and not realise if something is dangerous.

Emotional regulation

Your ADHD brain makes it harder for you to regulate your emotions. Lots of children with ADHD have “big feelings” that they find hard to control. You may get really angry or frustrated and act out without meaning to. You may find it hard to calm down. Some children with ADHD may also worry a lot.

Organisational skills

Children with ADHD may find it hard to organise their work and keep their school bags and desks tidy. During school work, they may skip lines on a page, and find it hard to write their homework down from the board. Some kids may often lose their books, pencils or parts of their school uniform.



However, none of these problems are your fault.

Why do I have ADHD?

ADHD happens because your brain develops a bit differently. This is just how you were born, and it part of what makes you an individual.

ADHD often runs in families. Your mum, dad, brother or sister, or an uncle, aunt or grandparent might have it too.

Lots of other children have ADHD, usually one or two in every class in school.

It can be difficult for chemical messengers in the brain to talk to each other when you have ADHD. ADHD medications can improve this process in the brain making life easier both at home and at school.

A small number of children will outgrow ADHD but most children will probably always have some symptoms of ADHD. However, you can learn skills to help you use your strengths and talents and overcome your challenges.

Things you can do!

There are lots of things you can do to overcome your challenges:

- You can get help from your parents, teachers, special education teachers, and CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) team to learn new skills to help you pay attention, organise yourself, and to manage your feelings.
- You can get lots of exercise. You might find that exercising before school or before homework helps you to pay attention and do your work. Try to balance the amount of time you spend watching TV, playing Xbox or time on your phone with other activities that you enjoy.

- You can try to eat more healthy foods such as fruit and vegetables every day.
- You can try to stop watching TV or playing computer games at least one hour before bed time. Try reading or drawing to help you wind down for bedtime.
- You can talk to your parents or teachers when you're frustrated or worried so they can help you.
- Try to get to bed early and get enough sleep. All children need to get at least 8 – 10 hours of sleep per night. A good night's sleep will help you to concentrate and focus better.
- You can take medicine to treat your ADHD symptoms if the doctor and you and your parents think this is a good idea.



What to expect when you get a diagnosis of ADHD

After getting your ADHD diagnosis, you and your parent's will be given information on ADHD. It is important that you read and understand as much as possible about having ADHD.

If you take medication to treat your ADHD symptoms then you will need to continue to go to the CAMHS clinic to get this monitored. At the CAMHS clinic you will get your weight, height, blood pressure and pulse rate checked.

You will get a chance to explain if you are experiencing side effects to the medicine and explain how the medication makes you feel. You will also get a chance to tell the doctor/ nurse or other mental health professional how the medication is helping to treat your ADHD symptoms. You will also get a chance to talk about any other difficulties or worries that you may need help with.

Other problems that can happen with ADHD

Sometimes children with ADHD will have problems in other areas too. They may have difficulty learning, and need extra help in school with reading or maths. They might need to see a speech and language therapist to help with language skills, speech sounds, or social skills. They might need to see an occupational therapist to help with organisational skills, sensory processing, motor skills or handwriting. They might need to see a psychologist to help them manage anxiety or other difficult feelings. You might access some of these therapies in CAMHS or in your local community services.

Positive aspects of ADHD

Children with ADHD will often be really friendly and enthusiastic.

They often have a great sense of humour and fun.

They are often creative, artistic and musical.

They have lots of original ideas - they can think outside the box!

ADHD can be an advantage in sports because as you have lots of energy you might be able to run for longer than your friends.



ADHD is just one part of you. Every child with ADHD is unique and has their own strengths and talents.

You may have lots of other talents and skills such as sport, art, drama, music, baking, gardening and computers.

Children and young people with ADHD can often do well at school and go on to further education, when they get the right support.

Why not write down some of your strengths below. Ask your parents or your teachers if you're not sure what yours are!

Things I am good at:

Videos on ADHD

Here are some video clips that you can watch which may help you understand a bit more about ADHD.

Video Explaining ADHD to Young people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rfcdx3qm77M>

‘ADHD and Me’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyaVKvuEBkk>

‘Let’s Talk about ADHD’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeamHE6Kank>

Reading about ADHD

These are some books that you may find useful when looking for more information on ADHD. You may choose to read some of these books by yourself and then discuss with your parents or you may read some of these books together with a parent.



1. *'Putting on the Brakes: Young Peoples Guide to Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder'*, by Patricia Quinn.
2. *'A Walk in the Rain with a Brain'*, by Edward Hallowell.
3. *'Attention Girls! A Guide To Learn All About Your ADHD'*, by Patricia Quinn.
4. *'50 Activities and Games for kids with ADHD'*, by Patricia Quinn and Judith Stern.
5. *'Learning To Slow Down and Pay Attention: A Book for Kids about ADHD'*, by Kathleen G. Nadeau.
6. *'Jumpin' Johnny – Get Back to Work! A Child's Guide to ADHD/Hyperactivity'*, by Michael Gordon.
7. *'The ADHD Workbook for Kids; Helping Children Gain Self – Confidence, Social Skills and Self Control'*, by Laurence Shapiro.
8. *'Cory Stories; A Kids Book about Living with ADHD'*, by Jeanne Kraus and Whitney Martin.
9. *'Thriving with ADHD Workbook for Kids: 60 Fun Activities to Help Children Self- Regulate, Focus and Succeed'*, by Kelli Miller.