

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Tips for Parents

Developed in collaboration with the mental health centers of NBHP and FBHP & the Client and Family Advisory Board

- 1. Learn about your child's symptoms.** Ask for written materials and read information on the Internet or from the library (see resource list below). Often children with ADHD have other emotional or developmental difficulties that can be treated if recognized, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, and anger problems. Not all children with ADHD have the same symptoms, e.g. it is not uncommon for children with ADHD to have periods of sustained attention and interest in video games or watching television.
- 2. Participate in your child's treatment.** ADHD is not caused by parents, but parents play a big role in helping children manage their symptoms and improve outcomes. Be involved in creating treatment goals and assist in practicing skills that your child is learning in treatment.
- 3. Communicate with teachers, prescriber and therapist.** Communicate regularly with your child's teacher to stay aware of behaviors and progress at school. Be an advocate for your child. Be familiar with your child's treatment and school interventions, including strategies that worked and those that didn't. You may be asked to provide copies of school or treatment records to coordinate your child's care.
- 4. Practice skills** you learn for working with your child. Behavior modification techniques used by parents can be very helpful to children, if parents continue to use them. Give praise and attention to positive behaviors and use consistent, appropriate consequences. Talk to your child's therapist if certain strategies don't seem to work so you can modify and improve them.
- 5. Take care of your child's physical health.** Tell your child's PCP about treatment your child is receiving for ADHD, including medications, and ask about ruling out possible medical conditions. Children with ADHD may have sleep difficulties. Encourage a healthy nutritional and physical activity routine to promote sleep and regulate mood and energy level.
- 6. If your child has a confirmed food allergy,** changing their diet has been found to be helpful. If there's no allergy, there is no evidence that diet modifications will affect symptoms.
- 7. Be in charge of your child's medication.** Talk with the prescriber about side effects and potential misuse of medications by your child or others. Parents should have appropriate medication oversight. Monitor your child taking medication; request school staff do the same. Keep medication out of your child's reach. Pay attention to side effects and reactions to medication (keep a record) and communicate these to the prescriber.
- 8. Create a routine/structure.** Encourage your child to use a phone, planner, or calendar to stay on track with daily activities, goals, etc. Make sure your child has a study area that is free from distractions and help them maintain organization in this area.
- 9. Get support for yourself** from friends, family, or other parents of children with ADHD. Parenting a child with ADHD can be challenging and frustrating. Ask your therapist about online or community support groups such as Children and Adults with ADHD (CHADD).
- 10. Encourage independence.** Your child can learn to manage their symptoms and can take a more active role in self-management over time.

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Resources for Clients and Families

American Academy of Pediatrics <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/adhd.cfm>

ADDitude: Living well with attention deficit <http://www.additudemag.com/>

National Institute of Mental Health (1-800-421-4211 or <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder/complete-index.shtml>)

Children and Adults with ADHD (CHADD) www.chadd.org

<https://www.achievesolutions.net/achievesolutions/en//Home.do>

Barkley, R. (2000). *Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete Authoritative Guide for Parents*. New York: Guilford Press.

Nadeau, K., Dixon, E. & Rose, J. (1998). *Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention: A Book for Kids About ADD*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.

Quinn, P., Stern, J. & Russell, N. (1998). *The 'Putting on the Brakes' Activity Book for Young People with ADHD*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.

Quinn, P., Stern, J. & Russell, N. (2001). *Putting on the Brakes: Young People's Guide to Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*. Washington, DC: Magination Press.