

Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects about 9% of kids and teenagers in the US. People may have ADHD with mostly inattentive symptoms, mostly hyperactive and impulsive symptoms, or both types of symptoms.

Families of children with ADHD may notice their child is more energetic or hyper than other children their age. Kids may have difficulty following directions because they frequently get distracted or daydream. They may appear forgetful, act or speak without thinking, and struggle with organizational skills.

While all kids may have difficulty with focusing and activity levels at times, these issues are more consistent and impactful for kids with ADHD. ADHD can get in the way of learning, lead to social struggles or self-confidence issues, and impact life at home and school.



What does treatment look like?



Treatment for ADHD may include medications, therapy, and/or classroom interventions. Young kids may benefit from **behavioral parent training** to support positive behaviors. Your child or teen may need **organizational skills training** and **classroom interventions** to help with school.



Medications for ADHD may include stimulants such as methylphenidates and amphetamine products, alpha agonists like guanfacine and clonidine, or non-stimulants like atomoxetine or Qelbree.



Stimulants work quickly and can be short acting, lasting a few hours. They can also be extended release, which work for most of the day and wear off in the afternoon or early evening each day. **Non-stimulants** are taken daily and build up in the bloodstream, taking 2-3 weeks to see effect.



There may be reasons based on your child's needs that your doctor will recommend a stimulant or non-stimulant. Medications can help kids feel calmer, help them focus and pay attention, and help them think before they act.

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What can I do?

FOR PARENTS:

- Recognize that kids with ADHD have brains that work differently, and they are not doing ADHD-related behaviors intentionally.
- Families can reach out to the school to request an IEP, 504 plan, or another plan for extra school supports. This could look like preferential seating in the class, extended time on tests, using visual cues/materials, frequent reminders, movement breaks, and/or extra communication with parents about assignments.
- Helping children learn organizational strategies and build routines is important. Visual charts, like pictures of steps in a daily routine, or sticker charts for younger children can help them stay on track and decrease the need for repeated reminders.
- Give directions in smaller chunks or for one thing at a time.
- Use lots of positive attention for appropriate behavior or any time your child is staying focused.

FOR TEENS:

- Use a schedule, calendar, or agenda to stay organized. Keeping things routine can help you remember what you need to do or where you put your belongings.
- Put items in the same place each day to help you remember them. If you have a phone, consider setting alarms to remind you to do tasks or use apps for things like reminders or to do lists.
- Make a to do list. Reward yourself after you accomplish a hard task.



How do I get help?

If you need more help, talk to your primary care provider or get support from a mental health provider. To find a mental health provider, call the phone number on the back of your child's insurance card and ask for a list of covered mental health providers in your area. You can also search for providers on your insurance company's website. For support finding resources for housing, food, and more, visit the [Children's National Hospital Community Resources website](#).

- Scan here for more information about how to find a mental health provider and how to get help in a crisis.



Pediatric **Health** Network

