

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Information for young people,
parents, carers and school staff

ADHD



What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a complex condition that affects how the brain works.

This can change the way people learn, experience, and interact with the world.

It's usually diagnosed in children and young people but can sometimes be missed until someone is an adult.

If you have ADHD, you might find it hard to sit still, focus on tasks, or control your impulses.

But with the right help you can manage these challenges.

Symptoms of ADHD

Most young people with ADHD struggle with hyperactivity, impulsivity, and attention.

Some might have more trouble paying attention, while others might be more hyperactive and impulsive.

- ▶ **Hyperactivity** can include behaviours such as always moving, being unable to sit still, fidgeting, or finding it difficult to take part in activities quietly.
- ▶ **Impulsivity** can include interrupting (for example, butting into conversations or games), having trouble waiting for your turn, or talking a lot.
- ▶ **Attention problems** can include finding it difficult to pay close attention to details, being easily distracted, having trouble focusing, or having problems following instructions and organising activities.

Everyone has some of these traits sometimes; we can all be impatient, impulsive, or find it difficult to focus.

But for people with ADHD these behaviours are more intense and cause difficulties in their daily life and relationships with others.

Symptoms of ADHD can vary in intensity depending on where you are (home, school, and social settings) but they will still be present in most situations.

Emotions and behaviour

Other neurodevelopmental conditions can happen alongside ADHD. These include autism, tics, dyspraxia (trouble with movement), or learning difficulties like dyslexia (trouble with reading).

Many children and young people with ADHD can also have trouble managing their emotions. This might mean getting upset or angry easily. They might find everyday situations really hard to deal with, which others might not understand.

Because of this, they could be more likely to face tough experiences like bullying or being left out by others. Some young people with ADHD can become very sensitive to feeling rejected.

Some children and young people with ADHD might have behaviour problems, like breaking rules or getting into trouble with parents, teachers, or in their community.

They might also have emotional difficulties like anxiety or depression, or other mental health problems like eating disorders (for example, anorexia or bulimia), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), or issues with substance use like drugs and alcohol.

ADHD symptoms usually start when someone is young, but they aren't always noticed right away.

Changes over time

As they get older, some young people may experience a reduction of some or most of their ADHD symptoms. Others might still find them challenging throughout their teenage years and adult life.

When you become a teenager or an adult, you have more responsibilities and are expected to be more independent. This can make ADHD symptoms feel more intense.

However, as adults, many people find ways to manage their ADHD better because they can choose jobs and activities that fit their strengths and passions.

With the right support from employers and any needed adjustments, people with ADHD can thrive in the workplace.

Getting help

If you or your parents are worried about ADHD, talk to your doctor (GP) or school staff. They can refer you to a specialist for a full assessment.

This usually involves gathering information from different sources like parents, teachers, or out of school club staff.

Sometimes it can also include observations of the young person's behaviour.

Managing ADHD

There are several ways to help manage ADHD:

► Information

Learning about ADHD can help you understand how it affects your life and find ways to manage your symptoms.

► Environmental changes

Small adjustments at home or school can make a big difference. For example, sitting at the front of the class to minimise distractions, having regular breaks, breaking up tasks into smaller sections, or having a quiet space to do homework.

► Medication

Sometimes medication can help with focus and reducing hyperactivity. Common medications include Ritalin, Concerta, and Strattera.

Your doctor can help you decide if medication is right for you and how you should use it. Medication should only be used alongside support such as educational accommodations and psychological therapy.



Tips for children and young people with ADHD

- ▶ **Be kind to yourself:** focus on your strengths and write them down. Read them often to remind yourself of them.
- ▶ **Ask for help:** find a trusted adult you can talk to when you need support. Don't be afraid to ask for adjustments such as asking a teacher to give you a written version of instructions.
- ▶ **Trust yourself:** remember that there is a lot of misinformation about ADHD among people, even from some adults and teachers. You are an expert about your own life, what you can achieve, and what you need to support you. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise!
- ▶ **Build friendships:** sometimes it's easier to connect with others who have ADHD or similar conditions. You may find that you are able to understand each other better as your brains may work in a similar way.
- ▶ **Remember:** ADHD is a condition that can be managed, but you might not always be able to do all the things you want to or need to. Doing your best is what counts and understanding that everyone has bad days.



Tasks that need a lot of concentration, like homework, can be especially difficult for children and young people with ADHD.

Here are a few ideas that might help:

- ▶ **Write it down:** keep a diary of your tasks and check it regularly, ticking tasks off as you complete them. Try to remember to keep it with you. Use post-it notes and visual timetables in places where you will see them each day.
- ▶ **Quiet space:** find an area with no distractions to study. Noise cancelling headphones can be helpful in noisy places.
- ▶ **Be prepared:** before starting a task, gather everything you may need. This can include materials (books, paper, pens), water and snacks to keep you going.
- ▶ **Break it down:** divide big tasks into smaller parts.
- ▶ **Take breaks:** short breaks every 20 minutes can help keep your mind fresh. Get up and move or stretch. You can set a 5-minute timer to help you return to what you were doing.
- ▶ **Read before starting:** take time to read instructions carefully so you know what to do. You can highlight keywords and actions. Check the instructions again as you begin, to make sure you know exactly what to do.



Tips for parents, carers, and school staff

- ▶ **Understand ADHD:** remember that ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition, not a choice. Learning about it can help you respond better.
- ▶ **Positive reinforcement:** praise young people when they do well and focus on their strengths. It will help to increase their confidence and minimise the effects of criticism they tend to receive from others. Make sure to make positive comments more often than critical or corrective ones.
- ▶ **Simple instructions:** children and young people with ADHD can find it difficult to process many things at the same time. Break tasks into smaller, simpler, steps and use visual reminders to help them. You should also encourage them to get into the habit of writing their tasks down so it's easier to keep on top of everything.
- ▶ **Organisation:** keep things consistent and help them to be organised. If everything has its place and a child or young person is encouraged to use that place, it will be easier for them to remember where things are and be more organised.
- ▶ **Support:** joining local or online support groups can be very helpful for young people and their close friends and loved ones. Remember to only follow medical advice from a healthcare professional.

ADHD is largely genetic, and many parents find that they recognise traits in themselves after their child receives a diagnosis. This doesn't necessarily mean you have ADHD yourself. Seek advice from your GP if you are concerned.

Useful websites

National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH)

The National Centre for Mental Health's website has useful information and resources on ADHD. www.ncmh.info/adhd

The Royal College of Psychiatrists

Information on ADHD in children and adults, including downloadable leaflets. Search ADHD from the homepage. www.rcpsych.ac.uk

NHS Choices

A comprehensive guide to ADHD from the NHS. Search ADHD from the homepage. www.nhs.uk

ADHD Foundation

<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/resources/>

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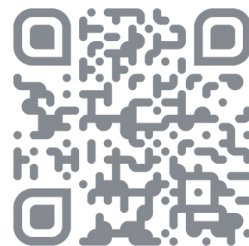
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Produced by the Wolfson Centre for Young People's Mental Health.

The information in this leaflet was created in partnership with our Youth Advisory Group and is correct at the time of printing. Original artwork by Margarida Maximo. Printed January 2025.

The Wolfson Centre is based in the division of Psychological Medicine and Clinical Neurosciences at Cardiff University and Swansea University.

The centre was created in 2020 following generous funding by the Wolfson Foundation.

Mae'r wybodaeth hon hefyd ar gael drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. I ofyn am gopi, cysylltwch â ni: wolfsonyoungpeople@cardiff.ac.uk

Wolfson Centre
for Young People's Mental Health

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