

Slide 1: Introduction

On-Screen Text

ADHD and Sleep: Understanding the Impact on Children and Families

References: (APA, 2022; WHO, 2022)

Speaker Notes

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, commonly referred to as ADHD, is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by persistent difficulties with attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. The DSM-5-TR defines ADHD as a pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Similarly, the ICD-11 defines ADHD as developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity that result in significant impairment (WHO, 2022).

While ADHD is often associated with classroom behaviour and academic performance, research increasingly highlights sleep as an important factor affecting symptom severity, wellbeing and quality of life.

Slide 2: Why Sleep Matters

On-Screen Text

- Supports brain development
- Improves attention and memory
- Regulates emotions
- Supports learning

References

(Becker, 2020; Hvolby, 2015)

Speaker Notes

Sleep plays a vital role in healthy childhood development. During sleep, the brain consolidates learning, strengthens memory, regulates emotions and restores cognitive

functioning. Deficits in sleep can impair executive functions such as planning, organisation and self-regulation, which are already areas of difficulty for many children with ADHD.

Becker (2020) argues that sleep difficulties may worsen existing attentional and behavioural challenges, while Hvolby (2015) suggests that sleep disruption should be considered a clinically significant factor in ADHD assessment and intervention.

Slide 3: Sleep Problems in Children with ADHD

On-Screen Text

Children with ADHD are more likely to experience:

- Delayed sleep onset
- Night waking
- Restless sleep
- Daytime sleepiness
- Reduced sleep duration

References

(Corkum, Tannock and Moldofsky, 1998; Sung et al., 2008; Xian et al., 2025)

Speaker Notes

Research consistently demonstrates higher rates of sleep disturbances among children with ADHD compared with typically developing peers.

Corkum, Tannock and Moldofsky (1998) found significant difficulties with sleep initiation and maintenance among children diagnosed with ADHD.

Sung et al. (2008) reported that approximately 73% of children with ADHD experienced moderate to severe sleep problems.

More recently, Xian et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis and found evidence of poorer sleep efficiency, shorter sleep duration and increased sleep latency in children with ADHD.

These findings suggest that sleep difficulties are highly prevalent and should be considered an important aspect of ADHD management.

Slide 4: Impact on ADHD Symptoms

On-Screen Text

Poor sleep may increase:

- Inattention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Executive dysfunction

References

(Becker et al., 2015; Langberg et al., 2017)

Speaker Notes

Research suggests a bidirectional relationship exists between ADHD and sleep.

Sleep deprivation negatively affects attentional control, working memory and inhibitory functioning. These are also the cognitive domains frequently impaired in ADHD.

Becker et al. (2015) found that adolescents experiencing sleep difficulties demonstrated poorer attention regulation and executive functioning.

Similarly, Langberg et al. (2017) reported associations between shorter sleep duration and increased daytime inattentiveness.

Consequently, poor sleep may exacerbate existing ADHD symptoms, creating a cycle where symptoms and sleep difficulties reinforce one another.

Slide 5: Emotional Wellbeing

On-Screen Text

Poor sleep is associated with:

- Anxiety

- Depression
- Irritability
- Emotional dysregulation

References

(Liang et al., 2024; Hysing et al., 2016)

Speaker Notes

Sleep plays a fundamental role in children's mental health.

Liang et al. (2024) found that children with ADHD who experienced sleep problems were more likely to report symptoms of anxiety, low mood and reduced psychological wellbeing.

Similarly, Hysing et al. (2016) found associations between sleep difficulties and broader emotional and behavioural problems.

These findings suggest that poor sleep may affect more than attention and behaviour; it may also affect emotional resilience and mental wellbeing.

Slide 6: Educational Impact

On-Screen Text

Sleep difficulties affect:

- Concentration
- Memory
- Homework completion
- Academic performance

References

(Becker et al., 2015; Arnold et al., 2020)

Speaker Notes

Children require adequate sleep to learn effectively.

Becker et al. (2015) found that poor sleep was associated with poorer academic functioning among students with ADHD.

Arnold et al. (2020) reported that ADHD can have long-term implications for educational achievement and functioning.

Children who are tired may struggle to sustain concentration, follow instructions and complete school tasks, placing them at greater risk of academic underachievement.

Slide 7: Impact on Families

On-Screen Text

Family impact:

- Increased parental stress
- Disrupted routines
- Sleep deprivation
- Reduced family wellbeing

References

(Sung et al., 2008; Theule et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2025)

Speaker Notes

The effects of ADHD-related sleep difficulties extend beyond the child.

Sung et al. (2008) found that children's sleep problems affected parental wellbeing and overall family functioning.

Theule et al. (2013) reported significantly elevated parenting stress among families of children with ADHD.

Brown et al. (2025) found that parents frequently described sleep challenges as one of the most difficult aspects of raising a child with ADHD.

These findings demonstrate that sleep difficulties should be understood as a family issue rather than solely an individual concern.

Slide 8: Critical Evaluation of the Evidence

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Strengths

- Consistent findings
- Large samples
- Longitudinal evidence

Limitations

- Parent-report measures
- Correlation vs causation
- Intervention research remains limited

Speaker Notes

Although evidence consistently demonstrates an association between ADHD and sleep problems, several limitations should be acknowledged.

Many studies rely on parental questionnaires rather than objective measures such as actigraphy or polysomnography. This may introduce reporting bias.

Furthermore, much of the research is correlational, meaning researchers cannot definitively determine whether sleep difficulties cause ADHD symptoms or vice versa.

While intervention studies have shown promising results, further longitudinal and experimental research is required to understand the causal relationship between sleep and ADHD outcomes.

Slide 9: Evidence-Based Solutions

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What can help?

- ✓ Consistent bedtime routine
- ✓ Reduced evening screen use
- ✓ Physical activity
- ✓ Behavioural sleep interventions
- ✓ Family-centred support

References

(Hiscock et al., 2015; Lycett et al., 2014; NICE, 2018)

Speaker Notes

Several evidence-based strategies may improve sleep outcomes for children with ADHD.

Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and reducing screen exposure before bedtime can support healthy sleep routines.

Hiscock et al. (2015) demonstrated that behavioural sleep interventions improved sleep quality and reduced ADHD symptom severity.

Lycett et al. (2014) found that many benefits were maintained over time.

Current NICE guidance recommends considering sleep concerns during ADHD assessment and treatment planning.

This highlights the importance of adopting a holistic approach that addresses both ADHD symptoms and associated sleep difficulties.

Slide 10: Conclusion

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Supporting Sleep Supports ADHD

Speaker Notes

In conclusion, sleep is a significant but often overlooked aspect of ADHD.

Research demonstrates that sleep difficulties are associated with increased symptom severity, poorer emotional wellbeing, lower academic performance and greater family stress.

Although more research is needed to establish the precise causal mechanisms involved, existing evidence suggests that improving sleep may offer substantial benefits for children with ADHD and their families.

Therefore, sleep assessment and intervention should be considered an integral component of ADHD support.

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