

What can I do to help?

Living with ADHD can be stressful for both the child and the family. It can be helpful if parents can find ways to look after their own needs as well as help their child.

The following are some suggestions which could help:

- establish consistent routines at home and school
- give simple clear instructions, only one or two at a time
- gently remind your child of things they may have forgotten
- be positive; praise your child for things they do well, as they often don't feel very good about themselves
- try to overlook minor irritating behaviour; focus on the important issues
- make sure that you do fun things together.



Who can I contact?

If you are concerned about your child, it may be useful to contact:

- your general practitioner
- a paediatrician
- a psychologist
- your local community health centre.

If you feel that your child's situation is urgent and you live in the Western Metropolitan Region, you may consider contacting:

- **The Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service**
Intake Service on **1800 44 55 11**
between 9.00am – 5.00pm,
Monday to Friday.



attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

No parent likes to hear that his or her child doesn't listen or can't concentrate. A possible explanation for this behaviour is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Children with this disorder are not deliberately being naughty. In fact, they often say they don't understand why they act the way they do. Mostly they have a persistent difficulty concentrating, controlling their behaviour and being overactive in situations where it is not appropriate.

ADHD is not an illness or a sign of low intelligence. With the right support (which may include medication), children with ADHD can live normal lives. As they get older, people with ADHD are generally able to manage their behaviour better.

What can contribute to ADHD?

There is still no clear explanation for what causes ADHD.

How do I know what to look for?

Your child's behaviour may be different from most other children of the same age, and may be causing problems in more than one place, for example, at both home and school.

A child with ADHD may be:

- distracted easily
- unable to finish tasks
- unable to keep still
- talking all the time
- likely to act without thinking
- having problems paying attention to instructions
- finding it hard to take turns
- interrupting others frequently.

If these symptoms significantly interfere with friendships, family or schooling and last for more than six months, you may need to seek professional advice.

What happens when my child is assessed?

There are no specific tests for ADHD; a diagnosis is made on the basis of an overall assessment. This assessment will require the professional to have accurate information from you as a parent and from people at school who have everyday knowledge of the child's behaviour there. Remember that not everything that looks like ADHD will be ADHD.

It is common for a child who has symptoms of ADHD to have other problems, such as difficulties with learning, behaviour and/or co-ordination. It is important that these are not overlooked and that you are helped to manage them.

If your child is diagnosed with ADHD, you will be given a range of strategies in order to deal with the situation. One of these options

may be the use of medication. The medications that are used have been widely used over many years and have been found to be relatively safe with few side effects. The medication only lasts a short time. It is usually taken during the day so that it is working during school hours. The main effects that concern parents are loss of appetite and the change in behaviour that can occur when the medication wears off.

How can I look after myself?

Caring for a child with ADHD can often lead to feelings that can be overwhelming, such as anger, guilt or sadness. These may be normal responses to the stress that you are experiencing. It is important that you have enough support from family and friends to help. It may also be helpful to find out about any support groups that you could contact.

By looking after yourself, you will be better able to look after the special needs of your child.

Dealing with a child who has ADHD can often have an effect on other parts of your life. For example, it can put a strain on your relationships with other family members. Counselling may be helpful in working through some of these issues. Sorting out these problems will also help your child.

