

Patient information from BMJ

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ADHD in children: help at school and at home

Children with ADHD often face challenges at school and at home. They might have trouble focusing, following routines, or managing tasks.

This information provides tips and strategies to help your child manage ADHD at school and at home.

Help at school

If your child has ADHD, their symptoms will likely impact them at school. Many things about a classroom environment might be hard for them, like following routines, staying organised, and sitting still. They might struggle to focus and complete tasks. They may also feel restless.

This can lead to challenges like falling behind in schoolwork or showing signs of disruptive behaviour.

These behaviours aren't your child misbehaving on purpose - ADHD is a medical condition. It's important to let the school know if your child has been diagnosed with ADHD. They will likely take steps to help your child adapt to the classroom and improve their ability to learn.

For example, there are types of **behavioural therapy** that can happen in school and involve your child's teacher. Behavioural therapy teaches children ways to manage ADHD symptoms in their daily life. For more detail on behavioural therapy, see our information titled: *ADHD: What are the treatment options?*

Your child's school and teachers may provide some extra help for your child in the classroom. Below are some of the things they may do to help.

- Involve a special education needs co-ordinator. These co-ordinators work with teachers to meet the needs of children with ADHD. This means that your child can stay with classmates but get extra help.
- Involve a specialist teaching service to advise the teaching staff.

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- Make special seating areas. Your child's schoolwork may improve if they can sit in an area that has few distractions and space to move around and release energy.
- Give your child extra breaks, or extra technology to help them learn. Some examples include noise-cancelling headphones, audiobooks, or speech-to-text apps. You might hear this called **assistive technology**.
- Give your child extra instructions so that tasks are broken down into manageable steps. If your child forgets an instruction, they should feel able to ask the teacher to repeat it.

It's important to keep in touch with your child's school and work together to make sure your child gets the most out of school.

You can ask your child's teacher or a school administrator for more information about what resources are available to help support your child. You could also contact your local education authority.

Help at home

There are also things you can do at home to help your child with their ADHD symptoms. Below are some strategies that might work for your child.

- Create a consistent routine with regular times for meals, chores, and bedtime. You can use a visual chart or calendar to map out daily routines and activities.
- Make a checklist of what your child needs to do each day for them to refer to. They can cross each thing off the list as they do it.
- Break down big jobs into smaller stages, and offer rewards or praise for completing each step. This might be helpful for tasks like cleaning their room or other chores, doing homework, practicing hobbies, or completing a project.
- Help your child find what works best for them to stay organised and remember things more easily. This could include trying out different tools like checklists, notebooks, timers, phone alerts, or visual reminders until they discover what suits them.
- If your child doesn't remember a task or instruction at home, encourage them to ask you to repeat it instead of trying to remember or guess.
- Set up a comfortable area with few distractions to complete homework. Encourage them to take regular, short breaks.
- Encourage regular exercise to help your child burn off extra energy. After-school sports that involve constant motion, like basketball or hockey, might be good options. Short bursts of movement during the day, like dancing or jumping jacks, might also help your child reset and feel more focused.

Older children with ADHD may find some of our tips for adults useful. For more details, see our information titled: *ADHD in adults: strategies for managing daily tasks*.

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