

# ADHD

## A Guide for Parents

Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



# Acknowledgements

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# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is also known as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or hyperactivity. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a developmental condition. Many children with ADHD are overly active, impulsive, have difficulty concentrating, and are easily distracted. Other children with ADHD just have difficulty concentrating and are easily distracted.

The symptoms of ADHD can affect a child's ability to succeed at school and with friends. However, ADHD can be effectively managed with behavioral therapy, medication, and parental guidance. Children with ADHD do much better when they have parents who have a positive attitude and know how to manage their child's ADHD.

At Kaiser Permanente we offer services, resources, and support to help you understand and manage your child's ADHD. The information in this ADHD packet includes:

- Services and resources to help you with your child's ADHD
- Information on school and home management
- How to obtain help from your child's school
- Information on medications

If you have not signed up for your [kp.org](https://kp.org) account, please go to [kp.org/mydoctor](https://kp.org/mydoctor) to find your physician's homepage. Under the "Stay Connected with Your Doctor" heading (left side of the navigation bar), select "Set up Access" under the "Manage Your Family's Health" section to create your own account. Once you have your own account, you can act for a family member, schedule appointments, or e-mail your child's physician.

For appointments or advice with your child's physician, please call 1-866-454-8855 or e-mail your child's physician through [kp.org](https://kp.org). For appointments or advice with Kaiser Permanente's Mental Health Department, call (925) 777-6300 (Antioch); (925) 847-5051 (Pleasanton); or (925) 295-4145 (Walnut Creek).

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This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.

# ADHD FACT SHEET

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## What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects both children and adults. Children and adults with ADHD have trouble paying attention and may have impulsive behaviors and hyperactivity. Some individuals with ADHD only have trouble paying attention. ADHD includes both those children with attention problems and hyperactivity. ADHD also includes those that only have attention problems. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is the name that some people call the group of individuals that only have attention problems. But the official name is ADHD.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder begins in childhood. The majority of children show symptoms at age 7 and some as young as age 3. Approximately 3 to 7 percent of children have ADHD. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder occurs more in boys than in girls. It is found in almost all countries and ethnic groups.

ADHD is a “clinical diagnosis,” which means there are no tests that directly indicate if a child has ADHD or not. A diagnosis is based on information received through clinical interviews; observations; questionnaires; rating scales; and, for some, educational evaluations. The information is gathered about a child’s behavior in multiple settings, such as at school, daycare, home, and in extracurricular activities.

For most children, the characteristics of ADHD continue throughout childhood and adolescence and often into adulthood. The major characteristics of ADHD improve with age. However, most ADHD individuals remain behind others their age in their ability to pay attention, to control their behavior, and regulate their activity level.

## What Causes ADHD?

No one knows exactly what causes ADHD. Research has shown that ADHD is not caused by poor parenting, video games, immunizations, lack of vitamins, and/or food allergies or food additives (such as preservatives, sugar, or aspartame). There is strong evidence that ADHD is inherited. In others cases, ADHD may be associated with problems that occurred during pregnancy (such as drug or alcohol use, smoking, or mercury from fish), birth complications, or toxins in the environment such as lead. In a few cases, ADHD is caused by disease or trauma to the central nervous system. Individuals who must take sedatives or medications for seizures may develop signs of ADHD as a side effect of these medications.

## What Are the Major Characteristics of ADHD?

| Difficulties with Attention  | Hyperactivity / Impulsivity  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty listening, focusing, or paying attention</li> <li>• Easily distracted</li> <li>• Avoids doing things that require ongoing mental effort</li> <li>• Difficulty following through on instructions or assignments</li> <li>• Procrastinates often</li> <li>• Goes from one activity to another</li> <li>• Does not pay close attention to details and makes careless mistakes</li> <li>• Loses or misplaces things</li> <li>• Forgetful and disorganized</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidgety and restless</li> <li>• Difficulty staying seated</li> <li>• Excessive movement (such as wriggling feet and legs, tapping fingers and objects, rocking or shifting position while performing tasks)</li> <li>• Runs or climbs excessively</li> <li>• Busy and "on the go"</li> <li>• Cannot play quietly</li> <li>• Interferes with and disrupts others</li> <li>• Impulsive and acts in unexpected ways</li> <li>• Talks too much or interrupts conversations; blurts out</li> <li>• Lack of response to discipline</li> </ul> |

## Other Characteristics that May Occur Along with ADHD:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moody</li> <li>• Anxious</li> <li>• Tics</li> <li>• Temper outbursts</li> <li>• Stubborn</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bossy</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Speech and/or coordination difficulties</li> <li>• Learning disabilities</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

## How is ADHD Treated?

Your child's ADHD is a life-long chronic health condition. No treatments have been found to cure ADHD. However, with the right treatment ADHD can often be managed. The right treatment can help a child with ADHD pay better attention, control behaviors, cope with daily problems, feel better about himself/herself, and gain a better self-image. Treatment of ADHD will require a long-term strategy. Your involvement, as a parent, is critical in the

treatment of your child. It will help you manage the ways ADHD affects your child and your family. With help and support from parents, family, teachers and physicians, children with ADHD can improve in school, with friends, and at home.

## **Medications**

The most proven treatment for ADHD is the use of medications. For most children diagnosed with ADHD, stimulant medications are a safe and effective way to treat symptoms. These medications improve attention and concentration, and decrease impulsive and overactive behaviors. Some children respond to one type of stimulant but not the other. It may take some time to find the best medicine and dosage. Your child's physician may vary the dosage over time to help get the best dosage with the fewest side effects. Side effects often occur early in the treatment. They are usually short-lived, but in rare cases can be prolonged. For more information about medications, please see the medication section of this packet. In addition to stimulant medications, other types of medications can be helpful in treating ADHD. However, these other medications do not work as well as stimulant medications. Physicians do not generally prescribe other medications for initial treatment.

After first starting ADHD medication, your child's physician will see your child within 3 to 4 weeks to check his/her progress and check for any side effects from the medication. Your child will then need several visits in the next 6 to 9 months to be sure the medication and dose are working properly.

## **Non-Medication Treatments**

Other treatments can be used with medications or may be useful before trying a medication. These other treatments include: parent training in more effective child-management skills, time-out/in, earning and losing rewards or privileges, therapy/counseling and support groups, and/or school interventions (such as making special arrangements and modifications in the classroom and with assignments). The goal of non-medication treatments is to change the child's physical and social environment. Additionally, non-medication treatments help parents, teachers, and other caregivers learn better ways to work with and relate to children with ADHD.

## **What are the Consequences of Untreated ADHD?**

Without treatment, a child with ADHD may fall behind in school, have behavioral problems, have difficulties with friendships and relationships, have trouble with family life (since ADHD can increase the strain between parents and children), and even have problems securing and retaining employment later in life.

## **What is the Long-term Outlook of ADHD?**

While ADHD is not a curable condition, it can often be managed. We use to think children

would “grow out” of their ADHD. We now know that this is not true for most children. Symptoms of ADHD often get better as children grow older and learn to adjust.

Hyperactivity usually stops in the early teenage years. However, up to two-thirds of children who have ADHD continue to be easily distracted, have mood swings, hot tempers, and are unable to complete tasks as adults. Long-term consequences of untreated ADHD include poor academic performance, low self-esteem, poor interpersonal relationships, and substance abuse.

A child who has loving, supportive parents who work together with school staff, mental health workers, and health care professionals have the best chance of becoming well-adjusted adults. Parents are the most important people in helping a child with ADHD lead a successful life. It is critical for you to read about ADHD and talk to people who understand it. This will help you manage the ways ADHD affects your child and your family. Your child’s physician and this packet will provide you with information and resources to help your child.



# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Classes for Parents

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## **Offered by Kaiser Permanente:**

The following classes are offered by Kaiser Permanente's Department of Mental Health, 3454 Hillcrest Avenue, Antioch, CA. For class dates and times as well as more information, please call Antioch Department of Mental Health at (925) 777-6300. All classes offered are subject to change.

### **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Overview Class**

This class will educate parents about the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD.

### **Nurturing the Developing Mind**

Learn skills to help children and teens plan, strategize, organize, set goals, pay attention, and manage difficult emotions and behaviors.

### **Home Improvement**

Learn skills to decrease acting out and improve positive behaviors in your child ages 2 – 12.

## **Offered in the Community:**

The Parent-to-Parent training is offered by Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), a non-profit organization serving individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

### **Parent-to-Parent Family Training on ADHD**

Learn about ADHD, parenting strategies, educational services for your child, managing the impacts of ADHD on your family, and more.

This training is offered as a seven-week class, meeting for 2 hours, once a week. It is also offered on two consecutive Saturdays, meeting for 7 hours for each class. Participants receive extensive materials, including articles, reference materials, and handouts about ADHD. All trainings offered are subject to change.

For locations, fees, registration, and more information: visit <http://chaddnorcal.org>

# CHADD

## Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

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Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder ([CHADD](http://chadd.org)), is a national non-profit organization. CHADD provides information, resources, and support to individuals with ADHD and their families.

### CHADD offers:

- **Information and Resources on:**
  - Symptoms and causes of ADHD
  - Diagnosis and treatment of ADHD
  - School and ADHD
  - Tips on parenting, time-management, social skills, and legal issues
  - And more
- **Support Groups:** for parents of children with ADHD. Get support, help, and information for dealing with your child's needs and with parenting. Talk to other parents who also have children with ADHD. CHADD also offers support groups for adults with ADHD. All support groups are open to the public. Support groups are on a drop-in basis. For more information and fees, if applicable, visit CHADD's Meeting & Event Calendar at <http://chaddnorcal.org/calendar>
- **Parent Training Classes:** learn about ADHD, parenting strategies, educational services for your child, managing the impacts of ADHD on your family, and more.
- **Online Presentations:** cover a variety of ADHD related topics for both parents and adults with ADHD.
- **Conferences:** attend a conference to get training, resources, and tips on ADHD.
- **Attention Magazine:** provides information and support for children and adults with ADHD.

# ADHD Books

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## ADHD Information for Parents

- *Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behavior* by Russell Barkley (1998)
- *Parenting Your Out of Control Child* by George Kapalka (2007)
- *Teenagers with ADD: A Parent's Guide* by Chris Dendy (1995)
- *ADHD/ADD Medications* by Peter Levine and Helen Neville (2011)(Order online through [parentingpress.com](http://parentingpress.com))
- *Medicating Young Minds: How to Know if Psychiatric Drugs Will Help or Hurt Your Child* by Glen Elliot (2006)
- *Buzz A Year of Paying Attention* by Katherine Ellison (2010)
- *Superparenting for ADD* by Edward M. Hallowell and Peter S. Jenson (2010)
- *Driven to distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood* by Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey (2011)
- *All About Attention Deficit Disorder* by Thomas Phelan (2003)
- *AD/HD and Driving* by Marlene J. Snyder (2001)
- *Making the System Work for your Child with ADHD* by Peter Jensen (2004)

## Learning Disabilities Information

- *In their Own Way* by Thomas Armstrong (2000)
- *The Dyslexic Advantage: Unlocking the Hidden Potential of the Dyslexic Brain* by Brock L. and Fernette F. Eide (2011)
- *No One to Play With* by Betty Osman (1989)

## Books to Help Students

- *Seven Steps to Homework Success* by Sydney Zental (1999)
- *Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention* by Kathleen Nadeau (2004) (For children with ADD ages 6-10)

- *All Kinds of Minds* by Melvin Levine (1992)  
(For children with ADD or learning difficulties ages 6-11)
- *Putting on the Brakes* by Patricia Quinn  
(For children with ADD ages 8-13)
- *I Would if I Could* by Michael Gordon (1991)  
(For children with ADD ages 11-15)
- *Keeping A Head in School* by Melvine Levine (1990)  
(For children with ADD or learning difficulties ages 12-18)
- *Help4ADD@High School* by Kathleen Nadeau (1998)  
(For high school aged teens with ADHD)
- *Survival Guide for College Students with ADD or LD* by Kathleen Nadeau (2006)  
(For college students with ADD or learning disabilities)
- *Making the Grade with ADD: A Student's Guide to Succeeding in College with Attention Deficit Disorder* by Stephanie Moulton Sarkis (2008)  
(For college students with ADD)

## Libros en Español (Books in Spanish)

- *Hiperactivo, Impulsivo, Distruido. Me concoces? Guia acerca del deficit atencional para padres, maestros y profesionales*, Jose Bauermeister
- *Cuaderno de Trabajo para Padres, Maestros y Ninos sobre el Trastorno de Bajo Nivel de Atencion (ADD) o Hiperactividad*, Harvey Parker

## Magazines

### ADDitude

ADDitude has many online articles about ADHD symptoms and diagnosis, ADHD treatment, parenting tips, school and learning disabilities, and other ADHD resources. To read the online articles and to subscribe to the *ADDitude* magazine, visit [www.additudemag.com](http://www.additudemag.com).

### Attention

Attention is the bimonthly magazine from CHADD, a national non-profit organization for ADHD. It comes with a CHADD membership. To become a CHADD member, visit [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org).

# Tips for Helping Your Child at Home

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## Tips for Helping Your Child Stay on Task and Improve their Behavior

- **Keep your child on a daily schedule.** Set specific times and stick to a regular schedule for your child's daily activities (such as waking up, eating, playing, doing homework, doing chores, watching TV, playing video games, and going to bed). Setting a schedule will provide structure and a daily routine which will help with management of your child's ADHD.

Post the schedule where your child will always see it. Any changes made to the schedule should be explained to your child before the changes are made.

- **Help your child stay “on task” and organized** by using charts, checklists, or calendars.
- **Help keep your child “on task” and aware of time by using a timer.**
- **Make simple house rules.** Review the rules with your child. Tell your child what will happen when the rules are obeyed and when they are broken. Write down the rules and what will happen if the rules are not followed.

Be consistent – both parents need to use the same house rules, rewards, and consequences.

- **Set specific rules with clear consequences.** ADHD children respond best to specific rules with clear consequences. The consequences need to be reasonable and meaningful to your child. Be sure to review the consequences with your child.
- **Manage your child's behavioral issues** by dealing with only one or two issues at a time. Do not deal with all behavioral issues at the same time.
- **Use calm discipline**, such as time-outs or the loss of a privilege to discipline your child.
- **Make sure your directions are understood.** Get your child's attention and look directly into his/her eyes. Then tell your child in a clear, calm voice specifically what you want or expect from him/her. Keep directions simple and short. Ask your child to repeat directions back to you.
- **Alert your child when an activity or event is going to take place.** ADHD children have difficulty changing from one activity to another. Give 15, 10, and 5 minute time warnings when an activity is going to change (such as coming to dinner, doing homework, turning off the TV, going to bed, or leaving the house).

- **Make sure your child is supervised at all times.** Children with ADHD are impulsive, so they may need more adult supervision than other children their age.
- **Praise and reward your child** by offering positive words and hugs, or give small prizes for good behavior, for reaching goals, for improvements, and things your child does well.
- **Focus on effort, not school grades.** Praise and reward your child when he/she puts forth good effort and completes school work, not just for good grades. You can give extra rewards for earning better grades.
- **Give your child lots of attention and affection.** Spend time with your child doing activities you both enjoy. Emphasize your child's strengths.
- **Read aloud to your child.** If your child is of preschool age, reading aloud can improve your child's ability to pay attention. Turn off the TV and other electronic devices and use puzzles and games instead.
- **Make sure your child eats healthy, nutritious meals and snacks.** Eating breakfast is very important, especially if your child is taking medications for ADHD. Breakfast needs to include protein such as milk and eggs. Your child does not have to only eat breakfast foods. Sandwiches or leftovers from dinner are fine for breakfast. If your child doesn't eat a lot for lunch he/she should eat a snack with protein (such as a protein bar, nuts, or string cheese) to help him/her get through the afternoon in school.
- **Set a specific bedtime** to make sure your child gets plenty of sleep. Being tired can make ADHD symptoms worse. Avoid electronic media (video games, computers, iPad, cell phones, texting, TV) for 30 to 60 minutes before bed because electronics make it harder for your child to fall asleep.
- **Encourage your child to get involved in activities** such as dance, music, art, sports, and other activities. Getting involved in activities can help your child focus his/her attention. It can also help your child feel good about himself/herself and can help boost his/her self-esteem.

## Tips for Helping your Child with Homework

- **Set a homework routine.** Pick a regular place for doing homework that is away from distractions such as other people, TV, and video games.

If your child has no homework, he/she should still maintain the same homework routine. Your child should sit at his/her desk and work in a workbook or do some other task.

- **Assist your child in getting started on homework.** For example, read the directions and do the first problem/item together, and watch your child do the next problem/item on his/her own. Then get up and leave and let your child complete the homework.

- **Break homework and other tasks into small segments.** Take frequent breaks. This will help your child complete his/her homework and other tasks.
- **Do not set up your child's desk in his/her bedroom because it is too distracting.** Keep the desk clear of everything except for what is needed to do the homework. This will help your child concentrate better. Also, keep all school supplies in one area at home.
- **Help keep your child organized for school.** Have different color binders/notebooks for each subject and a separate folder for homework assignments. Write the subject on each binder/notebook. Your child should keep pens, pencils, erasers, and other school supplies in an organizer box.
- **Have your child set out all school items before he/she goes to bed.** Each evening before bedtime, help your child organize what he/she needs for school and other activities for the next day. For example, put the backpack and other school items next to the front door so that your child does not forget to take them to school.
- **Talk with and listen to your child about school every day.** For example, ask: "I'd like to hear about your day." Don't ask: "What did you do today?" Ask your child: "Let's look at your assignment sheet." Don't ask: "Do you have any homework?"
- **Encourage your child and reward him/her for finishing assignments and turning them in on time.** This will help your child improve his/her ability to get assignments turned in on time. Use a reward system (such as stars on a chart that is displayed at home) for each homework assignment completed and returned to school. Reward your child for the stars he/she receives. Be consistent with the rewards you give.



## ADHD INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

# How to help your child sleep better



*If bedtime is a struggle for your child with ADHD, you are not alone.*

About 50 percent of children with ADHD have problems with sleep. The most common difficulty is falling asleep. Children with ADHD may take up to 1 or even 2 hours to fall asleep once you put them to bed. As a parent, you can find ways to help your child—and yourself—to deal with this challenge successfully.

### Why this problem occurs

Kids with ADHD have trouble with self-management. It is hard for them to control their impulses, their activity level, and their ability to focus on one thing at a time. So, they may also have difficulty with normal sleep.

There are three main reasons for this:

- The ADHD itself, which can make kids overly sensitive to stimulation.
- Distraction because of noises in their rooms.
- The medication kids take to help manage their ADHD may cause sleeplessness.

As a result, many ADHD children are night owls. They stay up late and have trouble getting up in the morning.

Ideally, ADHD children would live in a world in which the school day starts at noon, but unfortunately, they have to get up early for school. Falling asleep late and getting up early makes any child tired the next day, especially during the first few

hours of the morning. But there are ways to help your child with sleep.

### How you can help

- First, talk with your doctor to determine the most likely cause of your child's sleep problem.
- Try not to blame your child for the sleep problem. Most children want to fall asleep more easily, but they can't.
- If the sleep problem is due to the ADHD itself, keep a log for two weeks of how long it takes your child to fall asleep each night. This will help you and your doctor decide how significant the problem is, and how best to address it.
- If the problem is significant, work on improving your child's sleep habits through some of the following techniques:
  - Avoid having your child take afternoon naps, if possible. Naps may prevent your child from getting tired enough at night.
  - Try to get your child to be physically active in the afternoon. Exercise often helps with sleep later at night.
  - Make sure your child is not exposed to electronic media (TV, video games, computers, texting) in the 30 – 60 minute period before going to bed.
  - Have your child take a warm bath or long shower one hour before bed.



- After the bath or shower, have your child engage only in quiet activities to help him/her calm down and prepare to fall asleep.
- All children should avoid caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, or cola.

## Bedtime Routines

- For some children, reading before bed may help them relax. If it doesn't, choose another bedtime activity.
- Playing music may help relax your child. Find a type of music that soothes your child. Some children actually calm down with rock music. Others respond well to softer sounds, or to relaxation and visualization imagery recordings.
- Turning on a fan (or other white noise) blocks out distracting noises and may help induce sleep.
- A healthy snack before bed may help. Choose a snack without added sugar.
- Spend quiet time with your child before bed. Cuddling, talking, or reading together can be very soothing.
- Try using relaxation techniques such as the following: Have your child tense a group of muscles, such as the neck and shoulders, for 15 to 30 seconds and then relax them. Then have your child tighten another group of muscles and relax in the same way. Continue this pattern of tightening and relaxing different sets of muscles for several

minutes. When finished, your child may be much more relaxed and ready to sleep.

These techniques can help many children with sleep problems. If you've tried the approaches above for several weeks and are still having difficulties, medication may also help. It's important to discuss options with your doctor.

## Medicines that can help

- Melatonin is a body hormone that helps many people go to sleep. In studies, it has been shown to help ADHD children fall asleep when given at night in doses between 2 mg and 10 mg. It hasn't been studied as extensively as other sleep medications, but appears to be safe.
- Dyphenhydramine (Benadryl) is an antihistamine that can cause drowsiness. It is taken at doses of 12.5 mg to 50 mg one hour before bed. It has few side effects besides drowsiness and dry mouth, but check with your doctor to make sure there are no concerns about using it. Some children stay sleepy too long on Benadryl and may be tired the next day. If prolonged sleepiness still happens after using the medicine for more than one week, then stop using it. Benadryl's effectiveness may lessen over time, so it may not be a good choice for prolonged use.
- Clonidine is a prescription medication that has been very

effective for sleep problems in ADHD children. Of the three medications mentioned, it has been studied the most extensively. Rarely, some children have changes in pulse or blood pressure with clonidine. So if your child takes this medicine, he or she will need to have blood pressure and pulse monitored by your doctor during its use.

If you use some or all of these approaches, it is very likely your child's sleep will improve. Getting more rest will make a positive difference for your child in school and at home.

## Other resources

- If you would like more information about ADHD treatments, visit your pediatrician's home page at [kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor)
- Learn more about ADHD medications by watching our video "Understanding ADHD Medications" at [kpdoc.org/adhdmeds](http://kpdoc.org/adhdmeds)
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

### Websites

- Children with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD): [chadd.org](http://chadd.org)

### Books

- *All About Attention Deficit Disorder*, by Thomas Phelan, 2003.
- *Medicating Young Minds: How to Know if Psychiatric Drugs Will Help or Hurt Your Child*, by Glen Elliott, 2006.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your child's physician or other health care professional. If your child has persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your child's doctor. If you have questions or need additional information about your child's medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.

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# Tips for Helping Your Child at School

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- **Talk with your child's teacher and have regular meetings with the teacher.**  
Find out how your child is doing at school, in class, at playtime, and at recess. Work closely with your child's teacher and other school personnel to find ways to help him/her stay on task. Ask for daily or weekly progress notes from the teacher. Do not wait until the problem or issue happens to talk to or meet with the teacher.
- **Talk to your child's teacher about making special accommodations** for classroom assignments, tests, and homework. For example, ask that assignments be divided into small chunks, shorten homework assignments, and that tests are not timed.
- **Ask to have your child sit at the front of the classroom and close to the teacher's desk.** Also have your child sit next to students with good work habits. This will help your child concentrate and focus better.
- **Have the teacher alert your child when he/she is not paying attention or is acting out during class.** For example, the teacher can alert your child by putting his/her hand on your child's desk.
- **Have the teacher provide immediate and consistent feedback.** This will help your child respond to the teacher's requests and classroom requirements. The teacher should not use terms such as bad or good when providing feedback.
- **Have the teacher prompt your child** on certain tasks or assignments, such as directly telling your child to turn in his/her homework.
- **Use a "homework report form"** to help your child keep track of assignments, keep assignments organized, and to remind your child to take assignments home and bring assignments back to school.

At school, your child should write down daily assignments on the "homework report form" and then have the teacher initial the form. Have the teacher check that your child understands the homework assignments.

At home, you should also initial the "homework report form" to make sure your child completed the assignments and takes the assignments back to school.

- **At the end of the day, have the teacher check with your child** to make sure that homework assignments, books, and school supplies are all in his/her backpack.

# Guidelines for Meeting with Your Child's Teacher

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It is important to communicate regularly with your child's teacher and other school officials about your child's behavior and performance in the classroom and at school.

1. Identify and discuss specific problems with your child's behavior and school related issues:
  - What is your child doing that he/she should not be doing?
  - What is your child doing correctly?
  - In what situations are the problems or issues occurring (in the classroom, at recess, etc.)?
  - How is your child being disruptive (in the classroom, at recess, etc.)?
  - How often does the problem behavior occur?
  - How many days, weeks, or months has the problem gone on for?
2. Ask the teacher what the expectations are regarding student's behavior in the classroom.
3. Ask the teacher what methods he/she currently uses and used in the past to deal with your child's behavior problems and other classroom issues.
  - What methods have worked? What methods have not worked?
4. Talk to the teacher to come up with a plan to deal with your child's behavior problems and school related issues. Also, discuss making special classroom accommodations for your child.
  - Tell the teacher how you deal with your child. What methods work and what methods do not work.
5. Ask the teacher the expectations regarding students' academic performance in the classroom.
6. Ask the teacher about your child's performance in the classroom:
  - What are your child's strengths and weaknesses in each subject areas?
  - What is the quality of your child's classroom work and homework?
  - Is your child turning in his/her homework on time?
  - Have there been any recent changes in your child's learning ability?
7. How does your child interact with other students in the classroom and at recess?
  - Is your child getting along with others?
  - How does your child socialize with others?
8. Before leaving the meeting, thank the teacher. Also, tell the teacher that you appreciate the extra time he/she is putting in for your child.

# Getting Help for Your Child at School

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## Is my child able to get help for his/her education needs at school?

Yes, it is the law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from birth to age 21.

Students diagnosed with ADHD and/or other disabilities may be entitled to special classroom accommodations or educational services if the disorder has a negative impact on academic, social, or behavioral performance at school. A diagnosis does not automatically entitle a student to services or accommodations.

Every public school should provide parents with information about the services and support available for their child through the school. The services available in private or religious schools may not be the same as the services offered in public schools.

## How does my child get special education services?

You have to request special education services from your child's school. You must write a letter to the school district for an assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to see if your child has a disability and requires special education services.

The letter must be mailed to the school district's Special Education Director/Coordinator. Also, send a copy of this letter to your child's teacher and principal. Keep a copy of this letter for your files.

Send the letter "return receipt requested" from the post office. This will tell you when the letter was delivered. Or, bring the letter to the school district. Ask that your letter be date stamped and get a copy before you leave.

## What are the next steps after I make a written request for special education services?

- **The school district sends you a proposed assessment plan.**

The plan must be sent to you within 15 days from the date that the school district receives your letter.

Once you receive the plan, you must sign it. Mail it back to the school district within 15 days. By signing the plan, you are giving permission to the school to assess your child.

- **Your child is assessed to determine if he/she needs special education services.**

If you disagree with the results of the assessment, you have the right to take your child for an Independent Educational Evaluation. You can ask the school to pay for this evaluation.

- **Your child is found eligible or not eligible for education services.**

As a parent, you can ask for a hearing to challenge the eligibility decision.

## **If my child is found eligible for special education services, what happens next?**

The school must meet with you to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child.

### **What is an IEP?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that any student who gets special education services have an IEP.

The IEP is a written document that describes the special education services that your child will receive. The IEP helps the school meet your child's special and individual educational needs. It also helps you plan educational goals with your child.

As a parent, you attend the IEP meeting with school personnel. If appropriate, your child can attend the meeting. You can also invite other people to this meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about your child.

For more information about Individual Education Program, see the *ADHD Resources* section of this packet.

## **Once an IEP is created, what happens next?**

- You will get a copy of the IEP.  
Everyone who will be involved in providing educational services to your child can also get a copy of the IEP.
- You must give written permission in order for the school to provide your child with special education services.
- Education services are provided to your child.
- Your child's progress is measured by the school. The progress is reported to you, the parent(s).
- The IEP is reviewed, at least annually.
- Your child is reevaluated as needed. He/she must be reevaluated at least every three years.

# Sample Letter Request for an Assessment for Special Education Services

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(Date)

(Parent's/Guardian's name(s) Your Address)  
(City, State, Zip Code)  
(Your Daytime Telephone Number)

(Name of the School District Special Education Director/Coordinator Name of the Local School District)  
(Address)  
(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_,

We are/I am the parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) who is in the \_\_\_\_\_ (grade level) grade at \_\_\_\_\_ (child's school name) I am requesting a comprehensive assessment to determine whether \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) is eligible for special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (including the Other Health Impairment category). As part of the assessment process, I am also requesting that my child be assessed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to determine whether he/she should be identified as "handicapped" pursuant to that law and to determine what, if any, accommodations might be required in his/her educational program in the event that he/she does not qualify for special education services, or in addition to special education services.

We are/I am requesting this assessment because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (state specifically why you want an assessment done) The following interventions and accommodations have already been tried: \_\_\_\_\_ (such as seating assignments, quiet area to take tests, etc.). However, \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) continues to struggle in school with \_\_\_\_\_ (list specific learning difficulties, social/behavioral concerns, and other problems. Such as taking tests, homework, low test scores, paying attention in class, etc.).

**Add the following section only if your child has been diagnosed with a disability and/or disorder (such as ADHD):**

\_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) has been diagnosed with \_\_\_\_\_ (state diagnosed disability and/or disorder) by \_\_\_\_\_ (name of doctor or professional that gave this diagnosis).

It is our/my understanding that we/I will hear back from you in writing within 15 days of this request. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you and your staff.

Please contact us/me at \_\_\_\_\_ (your daytime phone number) should you require further information.

Sincerely,

(Your name(s))

CC: (Your child's teacher)

(Your child's principal)

(List other individual's names who you think might need to know about this request)

\*This sample Request Letter for an Assessment for Special Education Services has been adapted from Parents Helping Parents and Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF).



## ADHD INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

# Frequently Asked Questions About Stimulant Medications

# Ritalin, Adderall, and Dexedrine



*Together, we can decide on the best treatment for your child's ADHD.*

## What are stimulant medications?

Stimulants are medications that increase the levels of certain chemicals in the brain. They can be useful for ADHD by affecting parts of the brain related to ADHD. These three stimulants are among the most useful for managing ADHD:

- *Ritalin* (methylphenidate)
- *Adderall* (a combination of amphetamine salts)
- *Dexedrine* (dextroamphetamine)

## How do these medications help with ADHD?

These medicines improve the most common problems related to ADHD. They help to:

- increase attention span
- make children less likely to become distracted
- decrease restlessness and fidgeting
- allow children to finish school work and chores more easily

They can also help children to think before acting, and in some children, decrease aggression.

Not all children with ADHD do well with these medications, however most children do benefit from at least one.

## How long do the effects of the medicines last?

Each medication comes in different forms that last between 4 and 12 hours.

## How can I help manage my child's medication?

If we do prescribe medication, it is important to pick up your child's prescription right away and give the medicine as directed.

Some children need to take their medication every day, while others need it most during school days.

We may adjust your child's prescription accordingly.

## Are these medicines addictive?

Many parents are concerned that stimulant medicines might become addictive. While they are chemically similar to addictive drugs such as speed and cocaine, these medications are not habit-forming as we prescribed them. When taken as prescribed, addiction has not been a problem with any of the ADHD stimulant medications.

## How will we monitor treatment?

Your doctor will want to see your child for follow up visits.

- Two to 3 weeks after starting new medication, we will measure your child's height, weight, pulse, and blood pressure. These evaluations are more frequent at the beginning of treatment.
- In time, if your child is doing well, those visits become less frequent, and your child will probably be seen every 4 to 6 months.
- Be sure to come to all follow up appointments. Contact us if you have questions or concerns about your child's medication plan.

## What would happen if my child took an overdose of this medicine?

Signs and symptoms of an overdose may include: fast heartbeat, rise in

blood pressure, irritability, muscle twitching, convulsions, confusion, and hallucinations. Such reactions usually happen after accidental ingestion of large amounts of medication. This is an emergency condition and should be handled at a hospital. Be sure that the medication is stored in a safe place, especially if you have younger children at home.

## What side effects do these medicines have?

Any medication may have side effects, including an allergy to the medicine. Here is a list of potential side effects, ranging from those that happen more often, to those that occur rarely.

## Common Side Effects

### Decreased appetite

This is a common problem that usually occurs at lunch time when the medication is most active. Appetite tends to improve by dinner. Breakfast is rarely affected because the effects of the medication will have worn off by then. If possible, give your child a good breakfast. Children will often lose weight at the beginning of treatment, but this usually stops after several months.

### Sleep problems

Although this side effect is common, it is more likely to occur if your child takes an after-school dose of medicine. Sleep may improve over time, but if it doesn't, discuss ways to improve sleep with your child's doctor.

### Abdominal pain and headaches

Abdominal pain and headaches are temporary problems which usually improve within 2 to 3 weeks.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your child's physician or other health care professional. If your child has persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your child's doctor. If you have questions or need additional information about your child's medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.

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Sometimes, either one may persist. If your child has continuing problems with either abdominal pain or headaches, talk with your child's doctor.

## Occasional/rare side effects

### Emotional changes

Some children become moody or depressed on medication. They may also get sleepy, "spacey," or overly focused. Also, some children get irritable when the medication wears off. If any of these side effects are severe or last a long time, the medication might be decreased or, in some cases, changed.

### Rise in blood pressure and pulse

The medication may cause an increase in blood pressure and pulse depending on the dosage. These side effects are usually minor. Your child's doctor will check your child's blood pressure and pulse during medication appointments.

### Tics

Tics are muscle twitches. Stimulants may cause tics. If the tic is mild, the medication can usually be continued. If a severe tic develops, your child's doctor will likely recommend changing medicines.

### Effects on growth

There have been studies suggesting that long-term medication therapy can slow growth by a small amount over the first 2 years of treatment. However, even those children whose growth slows down may well catch up during their teenage years. If you are concerned about your child's growth, be sure to discuss it with your child's doctor.

## Serious heart problems

Very rarely, chest pain, palpitation, or trouble breathing can occur. This is more likely if your child has a previous heart condition, so be sure to discuss this risk with your child's doctor.

## Other Resources

- If you would like more information about ADHD treatments, visit your pediatrician's home page at [kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor).
- Watch our online video "Understanding ADHD Medications" at [kpdoc.org/adhdmeds](http://kpdoc.org/adhdmeds).
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

## Websites

- Children with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD): [chadd.org](http://chadd.org)

## Books

- *All About Attention Deficit Disorder*, by Thomas Phelan, 2003.
- *Medicating Young Minds: How to Know if Psychiatric Drugs Will Help or Hurt Your Child*, by Glen Elliott, 2006.



# Resources for Parents of Children with ADHD

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## **Kaiser Permanente: Psychologists/Behavioral Specialists**

Mental Health Department

- Antioch (925) 777-6300
- Pleasanton (925) 847-5051
- Walnut Creek (925) 295-4145

[Kaiser Permanente: Parenting your Child with ADHD](#)

[kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor)

This video discusses the signs and symptoms of ADHD, common questions parents may have, and tips for maintaining a positive parent/child relationship.

## **School Resources**

### **The Special Education Local Plan Area Resources (SELPA)**

SELPA is responsible for ensuring that every child eligible for special education receives appropriate services. In 1977, all school districts and county school offices were mandated to form associations in geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries. To find out which SELPA services are in your child's school district, visit [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp)

### **California Department of Education**

[www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)

The Department of Education serves California by working with educators, schools, parents, and community partners.

### **Great Schools**

[www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org)

Great Schools provides school and learning resources for all grades, from preschool to college to help your child succeed in school and life.

### **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

[www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html)

Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an IEP. This website provides detailed steps about how to obtain an IEP.

### **International Dyslexia Association**

[www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)

The International Dyslexia Association provides a wide range of information and services that address the full scope of dyslexia and related difficulties in learning to read and write.

**Learning Disabilities Association of America**[www.lidaamerica.org](http://www.lidaamerica.org) (National Chapter)[www.ldaca.org](http://www.ldaca.org) (California Chapter)

The Learning Disabilities Association of America provides information and resources on learning disabilities. It also provides support to individuals with learning disabilities, their families, educators, and other professionals who serve the learning disability communities.

**Schwab Learning**[www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org)

Schwab Learning is a non-profit organization that helps children with learning disabilities and their parents. It provides information on all aspects of learning differences from ADHD to central auditory problems. It also provides information about educational rights and has many practical resources for parents and teachers. You can also subscribe to a weekly e-mail newsletter through their website.

**Wrights Law**[www.WrightsLaw.com](http://www.WrightsLaw.com)

This website provides accurate, reliable information about special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities.

**Typing: Computer Programs**

Available for purchase on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

- Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing
- Mario Teaches Typing

**ADHD Coaches****ADHD Coaches Organization****(ACO)** [www.adhdcoaches.org](http://www.adhdcoaches.org)

The ACO is a non-profit professional association of ADHD coaches. On this website you can find a coach who will fit your child's specific needs. ADHD coaches are life coaches for people with ADHD. They focus on specific techniques to help with time management and organization.

**Edge Foundation**[www.edgefoundation.org](http://www.edgefoundation.org)

The Edge Foundation provides coaching and other support services for students with ADHD and other learning needs.

**Online Resources****ADDvance**[www.addvance.com](http://www.addvance.com)

ADDvance provides answers to questions about ADD (ADHD) for children and adults at every stage of life.

### **ADD Warehouse**

[www.addwarehouse.com](http://www.addwarehouse.com)

ADD Warehouse provides a collection of ADHD-related books, videos, training programs, games, professional texts, and assessments products.

### **Center for Parent Information and Resources**

[www.parentcenterhub.org](http://www.parentcenterhub.org)

Provides information, programs, and services for children and youth with disabilities. *Information and services are also available in Spanish.*

### **Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

**(CHADD)** [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org) 1-800-233-4050

CHADD is the leading non-profit organization serving individuals with ADHD and their families. CHADD provides information on ADHD symptoms and causes, treatment, medication, and management. It also provides information on school accommodations, parenting, and local and national ADHD resources. CHADD offers local ADHD support groups and classes.

### **Children's Health Council (CHC)**

[www.chconline.org](http://www.chconline.org) (650) 688-3625

**For Spanish call:** (650) 688-3650

CHC specializes in providing educational services, parenting resources, therapy services, and other support services to families with child(ren) who have ADHD and inattention, autism spectrum disorders, learning challenges, and anxiety and/or depression.

### **Family Resource Network of Alameda County**

[www.frnoakland.org](http://www.frnoakland.org) (510) 547-7322

The Family Resource network offers peer support, information and referral, advocacy, and training to families of Alameda County who have children with disabilities from birth to age 22. Their trained staff can answer common questions regarding a child's disability, help locate community resources, assist with accessing specialized education services and health care for your child, and provide emotional support.

### **LD Online**

[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

LD Online provides information and advice on ADHD and learning disabilities for all ages.

### **Living with ADD**

[www.livingwithadd.com](http://www.livingwithadd.com)

Living with ADD is a site that allows people with ADD to share their experiences with others. There are stories, forums and blogs where people can write about living with ADD. It is easy to sign up for and members have access to posting videos, photos, blogs, stories, and can chat with other members.

### **Matrix Parent Network + Resource Center**

[www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org) 1-800-578-2592

Matrix provides trainings, information, and resources to parents of children with ADHD and other disabilities.

### **National Resource Center on AD/HD (a program of CHADD)**

[www.Help4ADHD.org](http://www.Help4ADHD.org)

A website with many resources for parents and families of children with ADHD.

### **Parents Helping Parents (PHP)**

[www.php.com](http://www.php.com) (408) 727-5775 or 1-855-727-5775

PHP provides services, resources, and support for families who have children with special needs. PHP also offers support groups and classes to help parents obtain needed services and support for their children with disabilities.

*Services and support groups also offered in Spanish.*

### **Information on ADHD Medications**

#### **Kaiser Permanente – *Understanding ADHD Medications***

[kpdoc.org/adhdmeds](http://kpdoc.org/adhdmeds)

This online video discusses ADHD medications, benefits and side effects of medications, and treatment plans(s) for your child's care.

#### **Kaiser Permanente – *ADHD Medications***

[kphealthcast.org](http://kphealthcast.org)

Visit this website to view a podcast regarding ADHD medications.

### **Apps for Android and iPhone**

#### **Behavior Status (for parents) – Android App**

This App also allows you to view positive and negative behavior changes over time, create detailed notes, and easily share reports with your child's teachers and medical professionals in order to track treatment progression and make changes if needed.

#### **Routinely (for children) – Android and iPhone App**

Routinely is an easy and fun way to build visual schedules on your phone. Children with developmental delays or other special needs feel comforted by knowing what comes next.

#### **EpicWin (for children) – iPhone App**

EpicWin is a cross between an organizer and a role-playing video game. You choose an avatar character, and then select a task that you want to accomplish. As tasks are completed, players pick up points, "treasures," and loot.

#### **iRewardChart (for children and parents) – iPhone App**

This App allows parents to input goals and chores for their children to complete. After completion of the task, they earn a star that goes towards a reward.