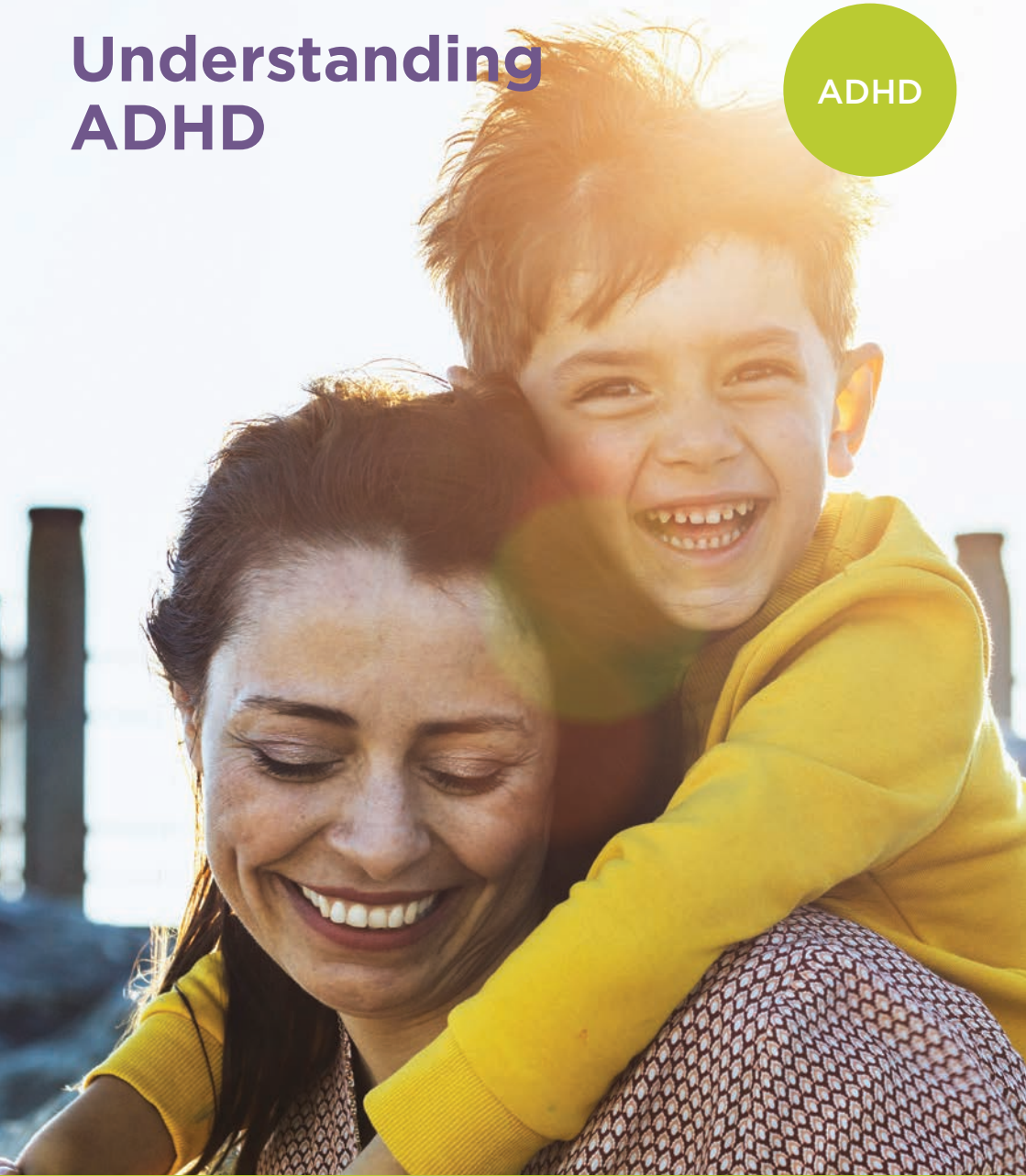


Understanding ADHD

ADHD



A guide for parents and carers



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This booklet has been developed to help you understand more about your child's ADHD symptoms, diagnosis and management options. It cannot, however, take the place of talking to a doctor. If you have any questions or would like more information on ADHD, please consult your doctor.



Understanding ADHD

What is ADHD?^{1,2}

If your child has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), they may display excessive levels of inattentive and/or hyperactive and impulsive behaviour.

ADHD can vary, and not every child with ADHD will have all the symptoms. Some children may be more hyperactive and impulsive, while others may be more inattentive.

To diagnose ADHD, your child's doctor will probably be looking for certain signs and symptoms, including:

- At least six inattentive and/or six hyperactive/impulsive symptoms during the past six months
- Symptoms that started before your child was 12 years old
- Symptoms that occurred in at least two settings, such as home and school
- Symptoms that interfere significantly in school, family or social interactions
- Symptoms that are not explained by another cause



What are the symptoms of ADHD?^{1,2}

Everyone with ADHD is different and may have different symptoms. Below is a list of symptoms that you may have noticed your child having trouble with, like paying attention or sitting still.

If your child has inattention, they often may:¹

- Not pay close attention to details, or make careless mistakes on schoolwork or during other activities
- Find it difficult to keep paying attention during tasks or activities
- Not appear to listen when spoken to directly
- Not follow through on instructions and fail to finish schoolwork or jobs
- Have difficulty organising tasks and activities
- Avoid tasks that require concentrating for long periods of time
- Lose things, like school items, books or shoes
- Be easily distracted
- Be forgetful in daily activities

If your child has hyperactivity and impulsivity, they often may:¹

- Fidget, tap hands and/or feet or squirm in their seat
- Leave their seat in situations when staying seated is expected
- Feel restless, run around or climb in inappropriate situations
- Be unable to play or participate in activities quietly
- Be on the go, acting as if they are driven by a motor
- Talk excessively
- Blur out an answer before a question has been finished
- Find it difficult to wait their turn
- Interrupt or intrude on others

Please remember these are not the only criteria that may be used to diagnose ADHD. Diagnosis should be based on a complete history and evaluation by a qualified medical specialist.³



What causes ADHD?^{1,4-7}

Research has looked into potential causes and has identified that genetics (ADHD in other family members), brain function and environmental factors may increase the risk of developing the disorder. However, the exact causes of ADHD are still not known and studies are ongoing.

How do you find out if your child has ADHD?^{1,3}

In early childhood, it may be difficult to identify symptoms of ADHD versus age appropriate behaviour in active children. The symptoms of ADHD are not exclusive to ADHD, and a range of different diagnoses and coexisting conditions also need to be considered.

To determine if your child has ADHD, the doctor may:

- Ask about current symptoms, including severity, duration, where they occur and how they affect your child's performance at school or home
- Assess your child's mental state and regulation of emotions
- Perform a comprehensive medical, developmental and mental health assessment of your child
- Examine the possibility that the symptoms could be caused by anything else
- Look at whether the symptoms are relevant to your child's age

A diagnosis of ADHD can occur only after appropriate assessment by a doctor – either a paediatrician or a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

Will ADHD symptoms change as my child gets older?¹

ADHD is usually diagnosed in childhood, and symptoms can change over time from the preschool years through to adulthood. Symptoms seen in early childhood may not necessarily remain at the same intensity in adolescence. For example, hyperactivity symptoms may appear less obvious in adolescence and adulthood, but difficulties with restlessness, inattention and impulsivity may persist.



How is ADHD treated?

Managing ADHD⁸

While there is no specific cure for ADHD, there are therapies that may help manage your child's ADHD symptoms. These may include educational interventions, medication or psychosocial management strategies. You may use all of these therapies or just some of them.

Treatment and care should take into account the needs of both you and your child. You and your child should have the opportunity to be involved in decisions about care and treatment in partnership with your doctor.



What strategies can I use to help my child?⁹

- Set consistent limits and reasonable expectations for your child
- Give your child instructions in a clear and consistent manner
- Review school work with your child and break up reading and homework into smaller sections. Make sure your child understands the instructions and knows how to complete the tasks. Ask questions to help your child to understand information
- Help your child learn how to organise school items and other school materials
- Provide attention and verbal praise as soon as your child demonstrates good behaviour. Ignore bad behaviour
- Help your child understand that actions have consequences
- Provide a caring but firm approach
- Look for creative ways to help your child learn and adapt

What strategies can I use to help my teenager?¹⁰

- Help your teenager remember appointments or to-do lists by posting in easy-to-see places, such as their bedroom door, a whiteboard or a fridge
- Leave a notepad for your teenager in strategic places, such as the car, kitchen or by the bed, so they can write down any reminder notes or thoughts as they pop into their head
- Suggest your teenager uses a mobile, iPad or diary to immediately write down any reminders, commitments or things to do
- Practise proactive planning with your teenager by taking a few minutes every evening to help them organise items such as books, clothes and keys for the next day
- Have multiple sets of keys made for your teenager so losing them is not a disaster
- Help your teenager split large tasks into smaller ones that are easier to manage. This can prevent feelings of being overwhelmed or discouraged
- Make sure there is a reward for your teenager's success in meeting their goals

Please ask your doctor for more information about strategies to ensure they are appropriate for your child's or teenager's situation.



Medication^{8,10}

Not all children with ADHD will require treatment with medication. Medication should only be considered on advice from your doctor, and based on their comprehensive assessment of your child. Medication is not a cure, and is recommended to be used in conjunction with behavioural strategies.

If medication is needed, the doctor will work with your child to decide which one works best. It may take some time to find the right medication and dose level. As with all medications, ADHD medications must be taken exactly as prescribed.

Support for parents and carers

If your child has ADHD, you may feel stressed quite often. Even though most of your time and energy is going into looking after your child, it is very important to take care of yourself as well. You will be better able to help your child if you are physically and emotionally healthy and feel socially supported.

You may also find it easier to be positive and supportive of your child if you remind yourself that their behaviour is a symptom of their ADHD.

If you would like more information on ADHD and treatment options for your child, please speak with your doctor.



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