

# Supporting Parents and Carers: Understanding ADHD

In partnership with



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## Introduction

Many parents and carers of children who are showing early signs and symptoms of ADHD often wonder what are the causes, how it can be diagnosed at an early age, and what sort of help is available.

If you suspect your child has ADHD or if they have received a diagnosis, there is a variety of help and support available. This article will take you through a range of resources for understanding and supporting your child's needs as well as providing answers to commonly asked questions and practical advice and support. It is also important to note, whilst ADHD is a medically recognised term, the most important thing is developing an understanding and respect for the individual.

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## 1.0 What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that makes it difficult for children to concentrate, sustain attention, sit still, follow directions and control impulsive behaviour. These symptoms make it difficult for children and young people to follow through on tasks in age-appropriate ways which can make classroom-based learning challenging at times.

## 2.0 What are the traits of ADHD?

The traits of ADHD can be divided into two groups: inattentive behaviours and hyperactive and impulsive behaviours.

### **Inattentive traits can include:**

- Being very distractible
- Having difficulty remembering
- Poor organisation

### **Hyperactive and impulsive traits can include:**

- Impatience
- Excessive movement
- Talking and interrupting
- Difficulties turn-taking

## 3.0 My child is not hyperactive, can they still have ADHD?

Yes. Children and young people who are inattentive but not particularly restless or impulsive can have what is called "Inattentive type ADHD." They tend to be diagnosed later because they are missed due to the absence of hyperactivity. However, Inattentive type ADHD can still result in many challenges for the child or young person, particularly in learning environments.

## 4.0 Is ADHD a brain based condition?

Yes. Brain imaging studies have shown that people with ADHD have structurally different brains than people without ADHD. It also runs in families. Children whose parents have ADHD up to a 60% chance of also having ADHD.

## 5.0 What treatment is available for ADHD?

There are a variety of research-backed therapies that can help relieve symptoms of ADHD. Some of the most effective approaches combine several therapies, such as medication. Stimulant medications (Ritalin or Concerta) are the most commonly prescribed. These drugs stimulate the parts of the brain that are understimulated. These parts of the brain are related to thinking and attention. The goals of these medications are to reduce hyperactivity/impulsivity and increase focus/attention. Another example is Cognitive behavioural therapy. This approach emphasises mindfulness and teaches a child to be aware of their emotions as a way of improving attention.

## 6.0 Can ADHD affect my child's sleep?

Yes, children and young people can experience difficulties with sleep. This can result in not falling asleep easily, not sleeping soundly through the night and then not waking up feeling refreshed. The mental and physical restlessness of ADHD can disturb a child's sleep patterns. This can then exacerbate problems with concentration and focus throughout your child's day in school.

## 7.0 I've heard that Executive Functioning is affected for people with ADHD. What is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning is the way in which your brain plans and organises itself. The functions are self-regulating skills that we all use to accomplish tasks, for example, target setting, prioritising, self-monitoring and time management homework. It is very common that children and young people with ADHD will have difficulties in these areas.

## 8.0 Where do I go for a diagnosis of ADHD?

For children, a Paediatrician will be the professional who does the assessment and gives the formal diagnosis. You can be referred to a Paediatrician either via the school SENOC or in some areas by going to visit the GP.

## 9.0 ADHD and Co-occurrence

It is common that ADHD and other neurodevelopmental conditions will run alongside each other. Other neurodevelopmental conditions include Autism, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Tourettes, Dyscalculia etc. For some children, they may receive a diagnosis of 2 or more conditions. This means that they are co-occurring. For some children, the co-occurring conditions are easily identified but for others, it can take some time.

## 10.0 Support organisations

The following is a list of websites and organisations that can help you. While we have done our best to list the most up to date and relevant information on this subject, please be advised that all the sources are constantly changing and new information will be added regularly so it is important to call back again if you need updated advice. Websites are listed alphabetically by name or narrow subject category.

### Living with ADHD

[www.livingwithadhd.co.uk](http://www.livingwithadhd.co.uk)

### Addup

<http://www.addup.co.uk>

### ADD / ADHD Online Information

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

### ADDISS, The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service

[www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk)

### ADHD VOICES

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

### ADHD Foundation

[www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)

### Mindroom

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

### PATOSS

[www.patoss-dyslexia.org](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org)

### The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

<http://www.cypmhc.org.uk/>

## About Witherslack Group

We are committed to sharing advice and support to parents, carers and professionals. Our webinars and online resources provide expert knowledge and practical support. If you would like to find out more information you can email [webinars@witherslackgroup.co.uk](mailto:webinars@witherslackgroup.co.uk) or visit [www.witherslackgroup.co.uk](http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk).



## About ADHD Foundation

To find out more information about the ADHD Foundation please visit [www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk).

