



MDwise

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ADHD: Helping Your Child Get the Most From School

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Introduction

Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have difficulty in school, because their symptoms—inattention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity—get in the way of learning.

Success in school is important for the development of healthy self-esteem and confidence.

You can help your child succeed in school by:

- Working with teachers and other school personnel.
- Educating yourself about ADHD.
- Helping your child control his or her symptoms.

How can you help your child be successful in school?

You can help your child have the greatest chance of success in school by educating yourself, building relationships, maintaining open communication, working with your child, and keeping good records. Preschool or kindergarten is the best time to start using these techniques. But it is never too late to help a child improve his or her school performance.

Education

Learning as much as you can about ADHD and your child's education rights will help you work with the school system more effectively.

- Learn about ADHD. Use the Internet to locate national organizations, ask your doctor, or visit your local library or bookstore for information about ADHD.
- Know your child's symptoms and treatment plan. Talk with your doctor about your child's behaviors that may interfere with learning and about ways to control those behaviors. Develop a record of your child's treatment plan .

- Learn about your child's education rights. Laws exist ensuring education rights for children who have conditions that interfere with learning. These laws also stipulate that parents have a right to be informed about and participate in educational decisions concerning their child. Contact your state and local education departments for information about ADHD in the schools and your rights to educational accommodations.
- Talk with other parents of children with ADHD. Join a support group for ADHD families. Find out how others have effectively worked with school systems.

Build relationships

A positive relationship with teachers and other school personnel will improve your child's chances of being successful in school.

- Start early. Before a school year begins, get to know the principal and other appropriate school personnel. Find out as much as you can about the school policies and rules, especially how behavior problems are handled. Find out if there are other children with ADHD in the school and how their behavior is being handled in the classroom.
- Share what you have learned. Find out if the teachers and other personnel need information about ADHD. Look for ways to help them get that information, such as suggesting books, pamphlets, or any local educational programs.
- Get to know your child's teacher. Before the school year begins, talk with your child's teacher about his or her style of teaching and discipline in the classroom. Find out whether the teacher has experience teaching children who have ADHD. Share with the teacher information about your child's symptoms and what behaviors may interfere with his or her ability to learn. You may want to share your child's treatment plan with the teacher.
- Make a school plan . Work with the teacher to design a plan to help your child perform to his or her potential. Address how to minimize misbehavior and how to react to it. Your plan will change as your child grows and develops. You may need to work with the school to develop an individual education plan (IEP) for your child. An IEP is a tool for classroom and homework adaptations for a child with a disability. For children with milder symptoms, the school may suggest a plan that is used for medical conditions that do not meet the IEP standards (called a 504 plan).
- Ask school personnel for help when needed. Tutoring or services that help with study or organizational skills are sometimes provided through the school. If not, school personnel often have a list of local resources that can help your child.

Keep communication open

Open communication with your child's teacher can help resolve problems that may occur throughout the school year. The following are suggestions for working and communicating with your child's teacher:

- Understand the demands upon your child's teacher. Most children with ADHD can be taught in a regular classroom, although adjustments are sometimes needed. Not all teachers are trained to do this. Also, teachers are stretched to their limits by large numbers of children in the classroom, making it difficult to give each child personal attention. Ask the teacher what he or she needs from you to help assimilate your child.
- Keep the teacher informed. Share with the teacher any relevant changes in your child's treatment plan. Help facilitate the sharing of information among you, your child's teacher, and your child's doctor.
- Visit the classroom. If possible, volunteer for school activities and parties. This will let the teacher know that you are interested in your child's education and willing to help.
- Request progress reports. Children with ADHD often lose or forget their assignments. Ask the teacher to complete regular progress reports of your child's performance and behavior.
- Have a final conference. Meet with the teacher at the end of the school year to discuss your child's overall progress and the teacher's suggestions for the next year. Ask him or her about possible teachers for the next year and how to help your child get the best chance for success in school.

Work with your child

- Use treatment methods as recommended by your child's doctor. This may include medicine and/or behavior management techniques. This will help your child control symptoms of ADHD at home and school.
- Keep your child involved. Let your child know that you support his or her teacher. Clearly outline your expectations and the consequences of misbehavior. Talk with your child about how the teacher will let him or her know that a behavior is becoming inappropriate.
- Link school and home. Use the same signals (such as hand signals) that the teacher uses at school to indicate when a behavior is becoming inappropriate. Also, you can reward your child with privileges for remembering to bring home school progress reports. You can further reward him or her if the report is positive. If your child fails to bring a progress report home, you may treat it as if he or she had an unsatisfactory report and withhold a privilege.
- Help your child organize. Even young children can learn to use lists, daily planners, or calendars to keep up with homework assignments, tests, and activities. A young child may need a teacher's help in writing down assignments.
- Use learning aids, such as tape recorders or computers. Teach your child how to take notes and to underline important information. If your child seems to learn best visually, ask about books that have helpful pictures and diagrams or workbooks.
- Have short sessions. Keep homework sessions to no more than 20 minutes without a break.

Keep good records

Health and school records can help monitor your child's academic and behavioral progress as well as help identify when treatment adjustments are needed. You should keep and update the following records:

- ADHD evaluations. Collect copies of any records that are used to evaluate your child for ADHD. These records often identify the type of ADHD that your child has, which helps with treatment.
- Evaluations for any other conditions with similar symptoms.
- History of medicines. Record all medicines that your child has taken or is taking to treat ADHD.
- School progress records. Keep copies of any school plans, daily school progress reports, and formal progress reports throughout the year. Also, keep your child's final grades and any achievement test results. You may find them helpful as you develop school plans for the following year.
- Individual education plan. If your school developed an individual education plan (IEP) for your child, ask for a copy. You may need to share that information with the health professionals working with your child.

Credits

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