

SUPPORTING
CHILDREN WITH
ADHD

This leaflet should be useful if your child has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This gives you a bit of information about what it is and how you can help at home.

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About ADHD

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder) is a **developmental** condition. This means that there's an issue with how the brain develops, and although there are no scans or blood tests we can use, it is **formally diagnosed** by a clinician experienced in ADHD. They use information from various places and a clinical assessment of the child.

ADHD children typically have problems with some, or all, of:

- ♦ **Hyperactivity**
- ♦ **Impulsivity**
- ♦ **Inattention**

This means they can have a short attention span, and can find it **hard to concentrate** and learn, particularly when in a group.

This can impact on the students' education meaning they can **underachieve** and not reach their potential.

It is estimated to affect **1 in 30** students.

Hyperactivity

- ♦ Fidgeting, restless, can't sit still
- ♦ Can't stop talking, noisy
- ♦ Running & climbing when not appropriate

Impulsivity

- ♦ Interrupts others
- ♦ Blurts out answers before questions have finished
- ♦ Struggles to wait their turn

Inattention

- ♦ Difficulty following instructions
- ♦ Short attention span
- ♦ Difficulties organising tasks
- ♦ Easily distracted

What causes ADHD?

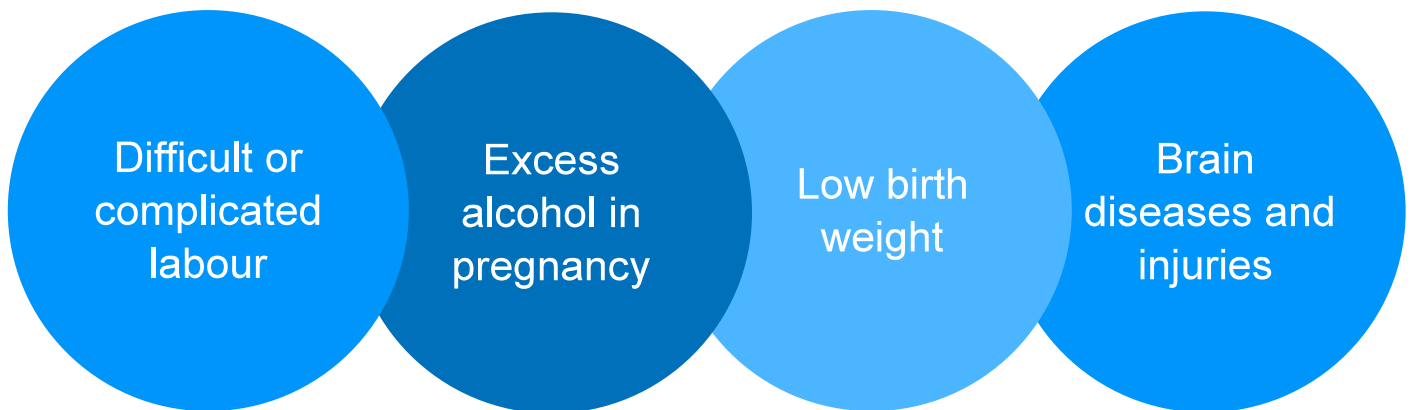
It is not known exactly what causes ADHD but we are starting to have a better understanding. What we know about the condition supports our ideas on how to manage it.

The role of genes

Studies of twins suggest that between 65%-90% of the risk of having ADHD comes from a person's genes. This means that ADHD is often inherited and tends to run in families.

The role of other factors

Some other factors in the child's development may increase the chances of having ADHD but they are not the cause of the problem. These include:



ADHD is **NOT** caused by bad parenting or a family break-down.

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The impact of an ADHD diagnosis

Having a child with ADHD can be an emotional roller coaster - we and other agencies will try to help all we can, but it is always going to be tough. Children with ADHD can have many positive qualities; they have bundles of energy and can be very creative. Talents like these should be embraced, to enable them to reach their full potential. Children with ADHD have aspirations too and, with appropriate understanding, have the ability to reach their goals. Perceptions of children with ADHD can be very negative. Remember that your child is a unique individual who may not be able to control many of their actions. You should not feel obliged to explain or justify these actions constantly. Remember that you are the best person to care for a child with ADHD. It's the child that matters - not the "label".

Living with ADHD

Living with the condition can be frustrating at times for children and families alike.

"My head sometimes feels dizzy with too much information. I don't like people talking too much as it irritates me. I like to run fast and climb high, and I never get scared"

Jake - 8 years old

"I have two boys with ADHD, and our lives are never dull. People stop and stare, I don't really care. My boys make me laugh and cry and also make me very proud"

Parent of children with ADHD

We can't tell you what it will be like, but we can help to support you.

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What happens now?

Now that you have received the diagnosis, you may wonder what the next steps are, here are several aspects to the management of ADHD.

Parenting support

Children with ADHD react best to a particular style of parenting, which does not come naturally to everyone. They also leave little or no margin for error. For this reason we believe that *all* parents of children with ADHD would benefit from support with their parenting. In Tower Hamlets this is provided by the Parent Advice Centre. We will refer you for this course.

School support

Very often, children with ADHD find school especially hard. They are required to sit still, listen to long strings of verbal instruction, and then convert these instructions into sequences of actions; none of these come easy to the ADHD child. Unfortunately, by the time they are diagnosed many children have had several years of being told to “just try a little harder” and so are giving up on trying, and becoming defiant. However, children with ADHD **can** be helped at school. It would be inappropriate for us to specify what schools ought to do in individual cases, as every child and school are different: however **we would expect the school to:**

- Construct and structured plan for educating your child, based on their particular needs
 - Discuss this plan with you
 - Make sure that the plan is being implemented
 - Review the plan regularly
- Inform their Educational Psychologist of your child's diagnosis.

An Educational Psychologist is an expert in helping teachers deal with specific issues in the classroom.

Tips and info for Parents

Be firm and establish clear rules and routines for meals, homework, computer/ TV/ phone usage, getting up and going to bed.

Accept absent mindedness which will often happen with children with ADHD. They will often need many prompts and reminders to follow instructions and complete tasks. Try developing visual aids using post its or charts to reinforce what you say.

Support and encourage organisation especially in terms of putting away clothes, shoes, PE kit and things for school.

Use simple language and short instructions. Children with ADHD find it difficult to process multiple things quickly and accurately, so try and stick to one step instructions. You can ask them to repeat it back to you so you know when they've understood.

Be patient and try not to sound irritated when children are finding it difficult to talk about things in a proper sequence. You may need to ask who, what, when and where questions to reinforce this.

Try to teach turn taking as children with ADHD can find it difficult to wait their turn in conversations or during activities. Using something to distract them can sometimes help initially in this process.

Establish good behaviour in public and do not wait until you get home to address problems. Act quickly otherwise the child may not relate the discipline with the incident when there's a lapse in time. Praise good behaviour too!

Talk to siblings about how ADHD may affect their sibling and why you as a parent may sometimes have to do things differently . You can try and explain why fairness is not giving everyone the same, but giving everybody what they need.

Find a club or activity that suits their strengths and interests. Sometimes group activities can be hard to master and the supervisors may not always have the right skills to manage. It can take a while to find the activity which is right for them, but don't give up! Also because children with ADHD can often socialise better with others older and younger than them you can find an activity across the age range.

Be parent rather than a teacher especially if you're trying to help with homework or they're doing some other work at home. This can lead to conflict on both sides, if you find problems with completing the tasks, you should contact the child's teacher. This doesn't mean you can't help: you can help to read difficult text out loud, or listen to them read, and help with some questions, but be a parent!

Diet

Some people find that there are certain foods which can make **ADHD** symptoms worse, but for most children with ADHD there is no need to look for foods to exclude: it is far better to try and ensure three balanced meals a day (including breakfast) containing a **variety** of food and plenty of fruit and veg.

Sleep

Many children with ADHD can have problems with their sleep. This is important, as a child who sleeps poorly will be more hyperactive and have even worse concentration. We may have discussed this in your assessment and made a plan for any problems, but if not there are a few “Golden Rules”:

- No screens in the children's bedroom. This includes TV, Computers and Phones.
- A quiet screen free hour before a **fixed** bedtime.
- The child, once in bed, should be returned there when they get up, with no discussion except for a friendly “Good Night”
- Try to develop a routine for bed time, and stick to it. It should be simple enough your child can do it without you!

Exercise

This can have a very significant short-term effect on feelings of hyperactivity, as well as improving focus. In the longer term it is really good for promoting mental health generally, and should be strongly encouraged in children with ADHD.

Benefits

Children under 16 with a diagnosis of ADHD may be entitled to DLA payments depending on the amount of additional care that they require compared to children of a similar age. Further information can be found here at the following website: www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children or by phoning 0800 121 4600.

Medication

The decision to start medication is something we may or may not have discussed at your assessment. This is an option that we can revisit if you want to but it is important to know, that any decision to go onto medication is for the family to make and no one else. If this is something that you'd like to know more about or to consider, you can mention it at your next review, or if you have been discharged to your GP, you can be re-referred to us to explore this more.