



"Specialist Care for Every Child"

Child and Adolescent Clinic

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Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Tips for Parents of Children with ADHD

General Tips

1. Rules should be clear and brief. Your child should know exactly what you expect from him or her.
2. Give your child chores. This will give him or her a sense of responsibility and boost self-esteem.
3. Short lists of tasks are excellent to help a child remember.
4. Routines are extremely important.
5. Identify what your child is good at doing (like art, math, and computer skills) and build on it.
6. Tell your child that you love and support him or her unconditionally. Spend one-on-one time together.
7. Catch your child being good and give immediate positive feedback.

Common Daily Problems

It is very hard to get my child ready for school in the morning.

- Create a consistent and predictable schedule for getting up and ready in the morning.
- Set up a routine so your child can predict the order of events. Put this routine in writing or in pictures on a poster for your child. *Schedule example:*
Alarm goes off
Eat breakfast
Brush teeth
Wash face
Get dressed
Take medication
Get on school bus.
- Reward and praise your child! This will motivate your child to succeed. Even if your child does not succeed in all parts of the "morning routine," use praise to reward your child for successes. Progress is often made in a series of small steps!
- If your child is on medication, ask your doctor if it might help to wake your child 30 to 45 minutes before the usual wake time, give the medication immediately, and then allow your child to "rest" in bed for the next 30 minutes. This rest period will allow the medication to begin working and your child will be better able to participate in the morning routine.

My child is very irritable in the late afternoon/early evening. (Common side effect of stimulant medications)

- The late afternoon and evening is often a very stressful time for all children in all families because parents and children have had to "hold it all together" at work and at school.
- If your child is on medication, your child may also be experiencing "rebound" – the time when your child's medication is wearing off and ADHD symptoms may reappear.
- Adjust your child's dosing schedule so that the medication is not wearing off during a time of "high demand" (for example, when homework or chores are usually being done).
- Create a period of "downtime" when your child can do calm activities, like listen to music, take a bath, or read.
- Let your child "blow off extra energy and tension" by doing some physical exercise.
- Talk to your child's doctor about giving your child a smaller dose of medication in the late afternoon. This is called a "stepped down" dose and may help a child transition off of medication in the evening.

My child is losing weight or not eating enough. (Common side effects of stimulant medication use)

- Encourage a large breakfast.
- Give the morning dose of medication after your child has already eaten breakfast. Afternoon doses should also be given after lunch.
- Provide your child with nutritious after-school and bedtime snacks that are high in protein and in complex carbohydrates. Examples: Protein bars, shakes or drinks made with protein powder, liquid meals.
- Get meals started with any highly preferred food before giving other foods.
- Consider shifting dinner to a time later in the evening when your child's medication has worn off. Allow your child to eat a second dinner, or a plate of leftovers.
- Follow your child's height and weight with careful measurements at your child's doctor's office and talk to your child's doctor.

Discipline

- Be firm. Set rules. Stick to them.
- Make sure your child understands the rules, so he or she does not feel uninformed.
- Use positive reinforcement. Praise and reward your child for good behavior.
- Change or rotate rewards frequently to maintain your child's interest.
- Punish behavior, not the child. If your child misbehaves, try allowing natural consequences, withdrawing yourself from the conflict, or giving your child a choice.

Taking Care of Yourself

- Come to terms with your child's challenges and strengths.
- Seek support from family and friends or professional help such as counseling or support groups.
- Help other family members recognize and understand ADHD.