

ADHD

ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

ADHD is a **brain-based** condition that affects **attention, self-control, and activity levels**.

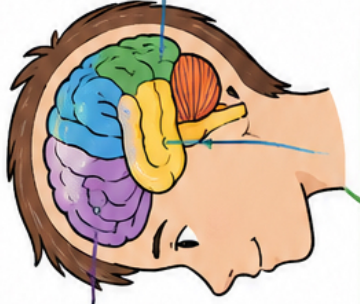
It is **NOT** a problem with intelligence or effort.

People with ADHD can be creative, energetic, funny, and amazing problem-solvers! ADHD is just **one** part of who they are.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

ADHD affects parts of the brain that help with focus, control impulses, and stay organized.

Prefrontal Cortex
Helps with planning, focus, self-control, and making good choices. (Often develops more slowly in ADHD)



Dopamine
A brain chemical that helps with motivation and attention. (Often lower levels in ADHD)

These differences are **WHY** ADHD happens. They are not someone's fault, and it is not something they can just "snap" out of.

WHAT CAUSES ADHD?

Genetics
ADHD often runs in families.

Brain Differences
Differences in brain structure and chemicals like dopamine.

Environment
Things like stress, sleep, or prenatal exposure can play a role.



ADHD is caused by a combination of factors. It is **NOT** caused by bad parenting, too much screen time, or lack of discipline.

HOW IT CAN AFFECT DAILY LIFE

INATTENTION

- Trouble focusing
- Easily distracted
- Forgetting things
- Hard time finishing tasks



Mind jumping from one thing to another

HYPERACTIVITY

- Feeling restless
- Fidgeting
- Talking a lot
- Moving when it's not the right time



IMPULSIVITY

- Acting without thinking
- Interrupting
- Trouble waiting turn
- Making quick decisions



HELP & SUPPORT

ADHD is treatable. Support can help improve focus, confidence, and success.



EDUCATION

Learning about ADHD helps people understand themselves.



STRATEGIES

Tools like planners, timers, breaks, and checklists can help.



SUPPORT

Encouragement from family, friends, and teachers matters.



TREATMENT

Therapy, skills training, and/or medication may be helpful for some people.

STRENGTHS OF PEOPLE WITH ADHD



Creative

Think outside the box



Energetic

Great problem solvers



With the right support, people with ADHD can thrive!



Passionate



Resilient

Everyone's ADHD looks different. Kindness, patience, and understanding make a BIG difference.

NON-MEDICATION STRATEGIES FOR ADHD

Tools and habits to help you focus, stay organized, and thrive!

1. ORGANIZATION & PLANNING

Use a planner or digital calendar to track assignments and deadlines.



Break big tasks into smaller steps.



Use checklists to stay on track and feel accomplished.



Keep your backpack, desk, and digital files organized.

Progress, not perfection. ★

You've got this!



Out of sight, out of mind—keep it visible!

2. MANAGE DISTRACTIONS



Find a quiet study space. Keep it clean and simple.



Turn off notifications. Silence your phone or keep it out of reach.



Use noise-canceling headphones or calming background music.

Do not disturb please.

Let others know when you need quiet time.

3. MANAGE TIME



Use timers like Pomodoro (25 min work, 5 min break).



Time block your day for classes, study, breaks, and fun.



Give yourself extra time—rushing adds stress and reduces focus.

4. STUDY SMARTER



Active recall: quiz yourself instead of just re-reading.



Use illustrated notes, videos, and graphic organizers.



Teach the material to someone else.



Mix it up: change locations or subjects to stay engaged.

5. MOVE YOUR BODY



Exercise boosts focus, mood, and motivation.



Take movement breaks every 30–60 minutes.



Find an activity you enjoy—walk, dance, sports, yoga, anything!

6. SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Practice self-compassion. ADHD is not a character flaw.



Use journaling to clear your mind and manage emotions.



Try mindfulness or breathing exercises to reduce stress.



Talk to someone you trust. You don't have to do it alone.

7. BUILD HELPFUL HABITS



Create routines for mornings, homework, bedtime, etc.



Start small. Stack new habits onto existing ones.



Celebrate small wins. Consistency > perfection.



Be patient with yourself. Growth takes time.

8. GET SUPPORT



Communicate with teachers about what helps you.

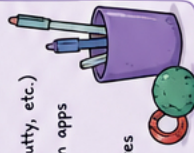


Use school resources: tutoring, study halls, counselors.



Surround yourself with supportive friends and family.

EXTRA TOOLS THAT CAN HELP



- Fidget tools (stress ball, putty, etc.)
- Visual timers or countdown apps
- Habit tracking apps
- Whiteboards or sticky notes
- Reward systems

EXAMPLE DAILY PLAN (YOU CAN ADAPT!)



Find what works for YOU and keep adjusting! ★

REMEMBER:

- ✓ There is no one-size-fits-all strategy.
- ✓ It's okay to try, adjust, and try again.
- ✓ Your brain works differently, not incorrectly.

≡ YOU ARE CAPABLE! ≡

HOW ADHD MEDS WORK

THE BASICS

ADHD is linked to differences in chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. The main ones are **dopamine** and **norepinephrine**.

These chemicals help your brain with focus, motivation, and self-control.

In ADHD brains, there is usually less of these chemicals available or they don't work as efficiently.

IMPORTANT:

Medication doesn't change who you are. It helps your brain work better so your skills and effort can shine.



ADHD meds help your brain work with you, not against you. They give you a better chance to focus, learn, and live the life you want.

More available chemicals = stronger signals = better focus, control, and follow-through.



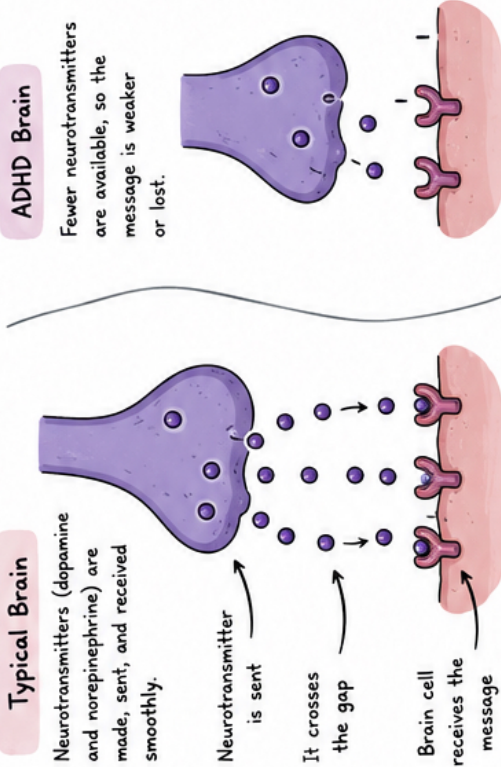
1. WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE ADHD BRAIN?

Typical Brain

Neurotransmitters (dopamine and norepinephrine) are made, sent, and received smoothly.

ADHD Brain

Fewer neurotransmitters are available, so the message is weaker or lost.



2. HOW ADHD MEDICATION WORKS

Most ADHD meds increase the amount of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain. They do this in two main ways:

Stimulant Meds

(e.g., Adderall, Vyvanse, Ritalin)

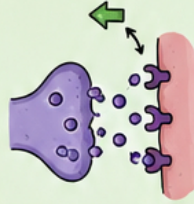
They help your brain cells keep more dopamine and norepinephrine available for longer.



Non-Stimulant Meds

(e.g., Strattera, Intuniv, Qelbree)

They work in different ways to increase or steady these chemicals or improve how the brain uses them.



3. WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

Medication doesn't give you instant motivation. It helps your brain remove roadblocks.

WITHOUT MEDS

- Distracted easily
- Tasks feel overwhelming
- Hard to start or finish
- Mind feels noisy
- Impulsive decisions



WITH MEDS

- Easier to focus
- Tasks feel manageable
- More in control
- Clearer mind
- Better choices

4. IMPORTANT TO KNOW



It takes time.

Meds can take days to weeks to find the right one and the right dose.



They help, but they're not a cure.

Skills, habits, sleep, exercise, and support still matter.



You still have to put in effort.

Meds open the door—YOU walk through it.



Everyone is different.

What works (and side effects) can be different for everyone.



Always work with a doctor or nurse.

Never start, stop, or change your medication without medical advice.

WHY MEDS CAN HELP



- ADHD involves brain chemicals that affect attention, focus, impulse control, and activity level.
- Medications help balance these chemicals so the brain can work more efficiently.

ADHD MEDICATION OPTIONS

THERE IS NO "ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL." DIFFERENT MEDS WORK IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

STIMULANTS

Most commonly used. Work well for many people and have many years of research behind them.



NON-STIMULANTS

Good options for people who can't take stimulants, don't respond to them, or have certain side effects.

IMPORTANT

- Only a doctor can decide which medication is right for you.
- It may take time to find the best medication and dose.
- Regular check-ins help make sure it's working and safe.

COMMON MEDICATIONS	STIMULANTS				NON-STIMULANTS			
	Methylphenidate (short-acting)	Methylphenidate (long-acting)	Amphetamine (mixed salts)	Amphetamine (others)	Atomoxetine	Guanfacine (extended-release)	Clonidine (extended-release)	Viloxazine (extended-release)
EXAMPLES (Brand names)	- Ritalin® - Methylin®	- Concerta® - Daytrana® (patch) - Metadate CD® - Focalin XR®	- Adderall® - Adderall XR® - Mydayis®	- Dexedrine® - Vyvanse® - Evekeo®	Strattera®	Intuniv®	Kapvay®	Qelbree®
HOW IT WORKS	Increases dopamine in areas of the brain that help with attention and self-control.	Same as short-acting, but released slowly throughout the day.	Increases dopamine and norepinephrine, which help improve focus, motivation, and self-control.	Also increases dopamine and norepinephrine. Vyvanse is a prodrug, activated in the body.	Increases norepinephrine in the brain (not a stimulant).	Affects receptors in the brain to improve attention and reduce impulsivity.	Similar to guanfacine. Helps with attention and impulse control and can calm the nervous system.	A newer non-stimulant that increases norepinephrine.
HOW LONG IT LASTS	About 3–4 hours	About 8–12 hours	About 4–6 hours (IR) up to 16 hours (Mydayis®)	About 4–6 hours (IR), 10–14 hours (Vyvanse®)	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours
HOW IT'S TAKEN	Pill, chewable tablet	Pill or patch	Pill (IR or XR)	Pill or capsule	Pill or capsule	Pill	Pill	Pill or capsule
COMMON SIDE EFFECTS (Usually mild and may improve over time)	- Decreased appetite - Trouble sleeping - Stomachache - Headache	- Decreased appetite - Trouble sleeping - Headache	- Decreased appetite - Trouble sleeping - Increased heart rate - Nervousness	- Decreased appetite - Trouble sleeping - Dry mouth - Headache	- Stomach upset - Decreased appetite - Nausea - Drowsiness	- Sleepiness - Low blood pressure - Dizziness - Fatigue	- Sleepiness - Low blood pressure - Dizziness - Dry mouth	- Nausea - Decreased appetite - Fatigue - Headache
GOOD FOR	Quick coverage for part of the day or as needed.	All-day symptom control.	Very effective for many teens and adults.	Vyvanse may have smoother all-day coverage for some.	Good for people who can't take stimulants or have anxiety/tics.	Helpful for impulsivity, hyperactivity, and emotional control.	Useful if sleep is a big problem or for high impulsivity.	New option for adolescents and adults.
THINGS TO KNOW	Often used for school hours or short-term needs.	Do not crush or chew extended-release pills.	Take early in the day to avoid sleep problems.	Vyvanse is less likely to be misused because it must be activated in the body.	May take several weeks to see full benefit.	Often used when stimulants aren't enough or aren't well-tolerated.	Can also help with tics and anxiety.	May take a few weeks to see improvement.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER



Lifestyle: sleep, exercise, nutrition, and routines matter!



Therapy/coaching: skills training can boost results.



Everyone's body is different—what works for one person may not work for another.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most side effects are mild and often go away as your body adjusts. Tell your doctor if anything bothers you or doesn't feel right.



Less appetite



Trouble sleeping



Headache



Stomach upset



Mood changes



Dizziness

THE GOAL

Find the medication and dose that helps YOU focus, learn, manage your emotions, and feel like yourself—with the fewest side effects.

You + The Right Support = Success!



★ Never change, stop, or start a medication without talking to your doctor.



WHY SOME KIDS CAN GET OFF ADHD MEDS AS THEY GET OLDER



ADHD doesn't just "go away" for most people. But as kids grow, their brains, skills, and lives change—so they may not need medication anymore.

SKILLS
STRATEGIES
SELF-AWARENESS

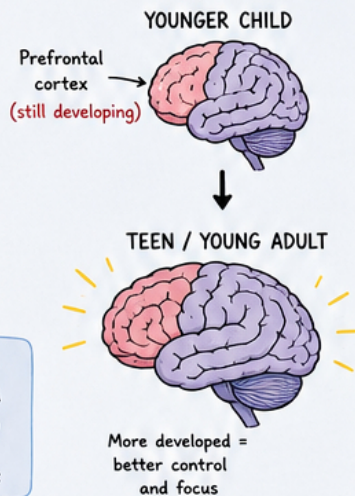
1. THE BRAIN "CATCHES UP"

ADHD involves slower development in areas like the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain that helps with focus, planning, and impulse control.

As kids grow, these brain circuits can mature and work more efficiently.

This can lead to:

- ✓ Better self-control
- ✓ Improved attention
- ✓ Less need for medication support



2. THEY BUILD COPING SKILLS

Over time, kids learn strategies that replace some of what meds were helping with.

- ✓ Using planners and reminders
- ✓ Breaking tasks into steps
- ✓ Learning how to study effectively
- ✓ Recognizing when they're getting distracted



3. LIFE STRUCTURE CHANGES

YOUNGER KIDS

- Sit still for long periods
- Follow strict schedules
- Less control over their environment



OLDER TEENS / ADULTS

- Choose classes, jobs, or routines that fit their strengths
- Can take breaks, move around, or structure their day differently



The environment becomes more ADHD-friendly, so meds may be less necessary.

4. INCREASED SELF-AWARENESS



They understand how their brain works.



They notice triggers (like lack of sleep, stress, or distractions).



They adjust their behavior more intentionally.

I focus better when I sleep well and have a plan.



This self-regulation can reduce reliance on medication.

5. SYMPTOMS CAN CHANGE (NOT DISAPPEAR)

Hyperactivity often decreases with age.

But attention issues may still exist—just less obvious.



Some people:

- Stop meds completely
- Use them only for certain situations (tests, work)
- Or switch to lower doses



IMPORTANT REALITY CHECK



ADHD doesn't "go away" for most people—it's usually managed, not cured.



Some people need meds long-term, and that's totally okay.



Stopping meds should always be done with a doctor, not suddenly.

Everyone's brain is different. There is no "right" timeline.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Some kids can stop ADHD meds as they get older because:



Their brain matures



They develop strong coping skills



Their environment fits them better



They gain self-control and awareness



Everyone's path is different. Needing medication isn't a failure—it's just one tool that can help. 💜

REMEMBER:

The goal isn't to "outgrow" ADHD. The goal is to build a life and tools that help you thrive. ★

Different brain.

Different strengths.



YOU'VE GOT THIS. 💜



Talk with your doctor about what's best for YOU. You're not alone—support, strategies, and time can make a big difference!

