



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

INFORMATION FOR ADOLESCENTS

Cork/Kerry Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
(CAMHS)

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ADHD: a guide for adolescents

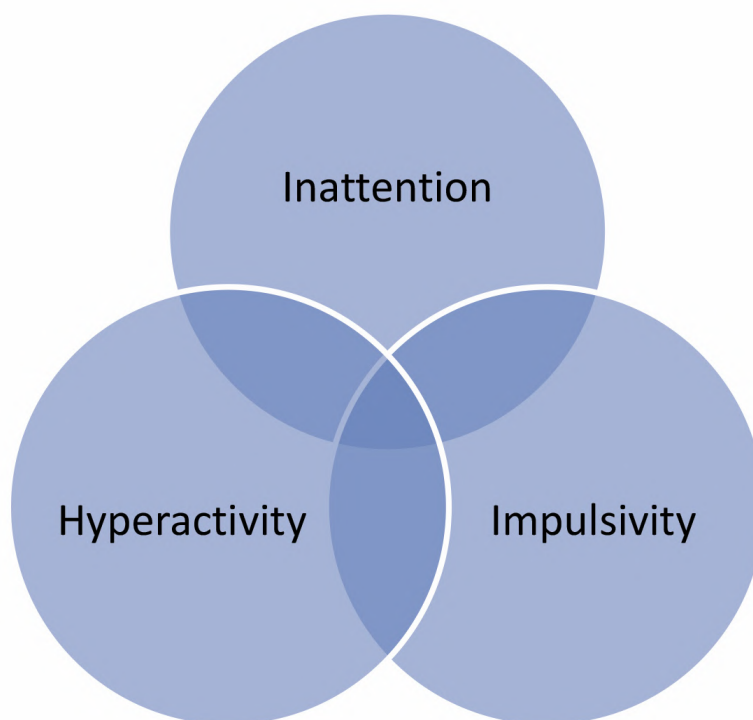
The letters 'ADHD' are written in a large, dark blue, cursive-style font on a yellow background with horizontal blue lines. A thick, dark brown horizontal line is drawn below the letters.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

This booklet is designed for Adolescents. ADHD is more commonly diagnosed in children but often it can be diagnosed later in adolescence if symptoms have gone unnoticed. It is important for you as an adolescent to learn more about your ADHD diagnosis so you can learn new strategies and ways of coping. Always remember that ADHD is just one aspect of you and continue to remind yourself that you have lots of strengths and talents which you can use to overcome your challenges.

What Is ADHD?

ADHD is a Neurodevelopmental disorder which affects up to 3-5% of young people with approximately 5-7% of children diagnosed worldwide. It can affect their behaviour, learning and social relationships. The three core symptoms of ADHD are:



Young people may find it difficult to keep up in school because they have difficulty concentrating, listening, and remaining seated. They may be forgetful and disorganised in their everyday activities which can often be problematic for them. They may also have difficulty managing their behaviour and emotions

What is ADHD?

Having ADHD means you have difficulty with some of the following:

Hyperactivity



Younger children may find it hard to sit still in class and may have lots of energy. However as children get older this hyperactivity reduces and adolescents usually report 'an inner sense of restlessness'. As an adolescent you may feel restless and fidgety.

Inattention



Research suggests that Inattention is one of the ADHD symptoms that can persist into adolescence and adulthood. At times you may find it hard to listen to the teacher and follow instructions. You may find it hard to start or finish work without reminders and you may put off tasks that require your sustained attention. You may find that you get distracted easily in the classroom by things that are going on around you. At home you may get distracted when you are doing your homework or doing other structured activities that require you to concentrate. You may have poor time management skills.

Impulsivity



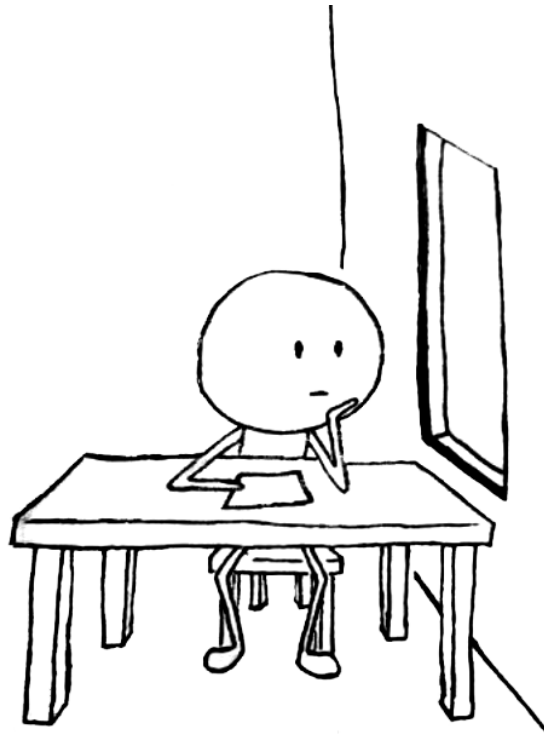
Younger children may get in trouble for interrupting or blurting out answers before questions have been completed. However, as an adolescent you may be impatient and find it hard to wait your turn. You might do or say things without thinking of the consequences. You may take more risks than your peers and not realise if something is dangerous. You may get easily frustrated or lose your temper easily. You may make hasty decisions and 'act before you think'.

Emotional regulation

Your ADHD brain makes it harder for you to regulate your emotions. Lots of children and adolescents with ADHD have “big feelings” that they find it hard to control. You may get really angry or frustrated and act out without meaning to. You may get into arguments more easily with your peers or parents or teachers and you may find it hard to calm down.

Organisational skills

Adolescents with ADHD may struggle with organisational skills. You may find it hard to organise your work, school bag and may have difficulty following the class timetable. You may forget to hand in completed homework. You may find it hard to organise projects for school and meet deadlines. During school work you may struggle to get work completed at the same pace as your friends. You may often lose or forget books, or items that you need for school



However, none of these problems are your fault.

Can Other Conditions Present with ADHD?



There are other conditions that are more likely to occur if you have ADHD. Some of these include speech and language difficulties, learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, anxiety, mood disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct problems, tic disorder, sleep disorders, and sensory processing difficulties.

Some adolescents may need to see an occupational therapist to help with organisational skills, sensory processing, motor skills or handwriting. Some adolescents may need access to assistive technology and have the use of a laptop for school work. Some adolescents may need to see a psychologist to help them manage anxiety or concerns regarding low mood. You might access some of these therapies in CAMHS or in your local community services. However, some children or adolescents may never have these difficulties.

ADHD and Girls



Symptoms of ADHD in girls often go unnoticed and their symptoms can be more subtle than boys. Girls tend to have greater difficulties with their attention, organisation and motivation whereas boys can often present as more hyperactive and disruptive. Girls tend to mask their difficulties more easily and are therefore less likely to be identified and referred for an ADHD assessment.

It is unknown how often diagnoses in females are missed. Adolescent girls with undiagnosed ADHD commonly present with mental health difficulties such as: low mood, anxiety and self-harm.

Why do I have ADHD?

ADHD happens because your brain develops a bit differently. This is just how you were born, and it part of what makes you an individual. There is a much greater risk of a child having ADHD if their parents or sibling has it as well.

Lots of other adolescents have ADHD, usually at least one in every class in school may have ADHD. More than 70% of children who have ADHD continue to have it in to adolescence. Up to 50% will continue to have ADHD in adulthood.

Neurotransmission and ADHD

When brain cells need to pass messages to one another they use chemicals called neurotransmitters. In ADHD there may not be enough of these neurotransmitters (chemical messengers) in your brain. The neurotransmitters most affected by ADHD are Dopamine and Noradrenaline. ADHD medication can help with neurotransmission. If the medicine works, it will help you to pay attention in school.

What to expect when you get a diagnosis of ADHD

After getting your ADHD diagnosis, you and your parent/s will be given information on ADHD. You will also be given links to information videos that you can watch so you are more informed about your diagnosis. It is important that you read and understand as much as possible about your ADHD disorder.

If you take medication to treat your ADHD symptoms then you will need to continue to go to the CAMHS clinic to get this monitored. At the CAMHS clinic you will get your weight, height, blood pressure and pulse rate checked. You will get a chance explain if you are experiencing side effects to the medicine and explain how the medication makes you feel.

You will also get a chance to tell the doctor/ nurse or other mental health professional how the medication is helping to reduce your ADHD symptoms and what other challenges remain for you. You will get a chance to talk about any other difficulties or worries that you may need help with. If you have any other mental health difficulties with your ADHD diagnosis such as anxiety or low mood you may also need other therapy or intervention to treat these diagnoses.

Things you can do!

There are lots of things you can do to overcome your challenges:

- You can get help from your parents, teachers, SEN teachers, and CAMHS team to learn new skills to help you pay attention and organise yourself, and to manage your feelings.
- You can get lots of exercise. You might find that exercising before school or before homework helps you to pay attention and do your work. Try to balance the amount of time you spend watching TV, playing Xbox or time on your phone with other activities that you enjoy like hobbies, clubs and sports.
- Prioritise social connections, especially at times of stress. It's really important to have good social support, and opportunities to spend time with friends are really good for our mental health. If you feel you don't have enough friends, talk to your parents and a trusted teacher to get help with this.
- You can try to make healthy food choices by eating a balanced diet.
- You can take medication to treat your ADHD symptoms if the doctor and you and your parents think this is a good idea due to the level of impairment caused by your ADHD symptoms.
- You can get help from CAMHS professionals or professionals that work in community services.

Sleep and ADHD

A lot of children and adolescents with ADHD may also have sleep difficulties. It is important to

- Try to get to bed as early as possible and get enough sleep. All Adolescents need to get at least 8 – 10 hours of sleep per night. A good night's sleep will help you to concentrate and focus better in school.
- Try and set up a good sleep routine. It is important to have the same bedtime and wakeup times to help regulate your body clock.
- Try to come off your phone or Xbox/ computer games at least one hour before you go to bed. The blue light omitted from screens can inhibit the release of your sleep inducing hormone 'Melatonin' which can cause you to become more alert and alter your natural sleep circadian rhythm. Try reading to help you wind down for bedtime instead.



How to Manage your Emotions

Teens and young people with ADHD may experience extra difficulty coping with strong emotions like worry, anger, and sadness due to differences in their emotional regulation system in the brain.

Emotions are normal and necessary. Some are pleasant, some are painful. It is helpful to see emotions like a wave, we can't resist the wave but we can learn to ride it until it passes.

The first step to learn to manage emotions is to notice and acknowledge them. Get in the habit of checking in with yourself throughout the day, ask yourself

- what's going on internally right now
- how do I feel
- what thoughts or worries are in my mind
- how does my body feel

This gives you a chance to notice if you're tense, irritable, breathing too fast, etc., and you can try to calm that emotion.

Make a plan about how to manage that emotion:

1. Do some deep breathing or practise mindfulness using a YouTube clip or app
2. Talk to someone about how you're feeling or write it down.
3. Chat to friends or loved ones to distract yourself or feel connected.
4. Do something to change your mood, watch your favourite TV show, listen to music that matches how you feel, play a computer game.
5. Get outdoors- go for a walk or run, play with a pet, or just sit outside.

6. Soothe yourself- have a hot shower, wrap up in a blanket, look at happy photos, read a favourite book.
7. Challenge negative thinking, ask yourself:
 - Will this be important in one month? a year? five years?
 - If this happened to my friend, what advice would I give?
 - Is what I'm telling myself true? Is it helpful?
8. Encourage yourself, practise helpful self-talk like:
 - I can cope with this
 - I can get help
 - It's okay to feel this way
 - This feeling will pass.
9. Focus on other people, do something nice for someone.
10. List the things you are grateful for today.

Feeling good about yourself

Young people with ADHD will often have difficulties in their self-esteem, and focus on the negative things about themselves. Try these tips:

- Recognise what you're good at- whether it's a school subject, sport, computer game, singing, cooking, being good with animals or small children, being a supportive friend.
- Focus on relationships that make you feel good, and let go of people who bring you down or criticise you.
- Act as though you feel good about yourself- accept compliments gracefully, stop checking yourself in the mirror, wear whatever you like without wondering how you look in it.

- It's okay to say no- sometimes we worry that saying no will harm a friendship. But learning to say no will build your confidence and help you recognise you can be yourself and still be valued.
- Practise being kind to yourself. Instead of criticising yourself when you do something wrong, try to be understanding, recognise that you are only human, trying and learning, and mistakes are part of what it is to be human.
- Give yourself a challenge- set a sensible goal and give yourself a pat on the back when you achieve it.

Dealing with conflict

Conflict is normal in all relationships. Sometimes people with ADHD have difficulty dealing with conflict in a healthy way as they may get too angry, not listen to the other person, and act without thinking.

When you are feeling irritated or angry, **STOP!**

Take a step back from the argument, breathe deeply and think things through:
What do I want to get out of this conversation? How much flexibility do I have with my goals- what am I willing to accept?

Then practise **DEAR MAN**

- D** Describe the situation – There is a disco on Friday in GAA hall
- E** Express your feelings – I really want to go to because...
- A** Assert your goals – this is what I think is reasonable
- R** Reinforce – I appreciate your understanding how important this is to me
- M** Mindful of goals – don't get sidetracked, stay focused on this issue
- A** Appear confident – stay calm, keep eye contact
- N** Negotiate – be prepared to give to get. Listen to what the other person tells you is important to them. Ask for their suggestions to the problem.

The key to managing conflict is to stay calm, really listen to the other person, assert your own feelings and opinions in a respectful way and be prepared to be flexible.

Supporting Homework and Learning

The following are helpful tips:

- Establish a clear predictable homework routine- find what works best for you in terms of time of day, music playing or quiet. Remove clutter and visual distractions. Try to incorporate movement, work while standing up or propped on your elbows on the floor, or use a squeeze ball to give you sensory input.
- Put your phone in another room or put a timed blocker on social media apps.
- Aim to work for maximum of 25 minutes followed by 5 minute break. Take a longer break every 60-90 minutes. It is essential to include movement in breaks, short bursts of exercise can be excellent to help you focus.
- Work in short focused bursts is much better than long periods of daydreaming.
- Colour code your books and copybooks by subject to help you stay organised.
- Try and break complicated tasks in to more manageable segments. Cover areas of the page you're not using.
- When completing homework, try to follow a low interest activity (boring) with a preferred high interest activity (interesting subject) to help you to stay focused and motivated.
- Learn to make good notes and summaries of work and always study off notes and flashcards rather than the book.

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- Get help from a teacher to learn good study skills such as making notes and summarising, and planning out a question and working to the plan.
 - Read the summary of the chapter first to prepare your mind for what it will read- this makes it easier to take in information.
 - Don't expect to take in information if the teacher is talking at length- ask for notes or summaries, and try to take notes yourself.
 - Try to use planners, checklists, and week to view diaries for planning daily activities, afterschool activities, course work and projects. Set reminders on your phone to check your to-do list.
 - Organise your to-do list properly
 - o Things that are urgent and important- do **now**
 - o Things that are important but not urgent- do tomorrow or when they become urgent
 - o Everything else- don't stress about it

ADHD and Education

Many young people with ADHD go on to further education and there are supports available to help you do so.

ADHD is classed as a disability in the education system. You may be eligible for:

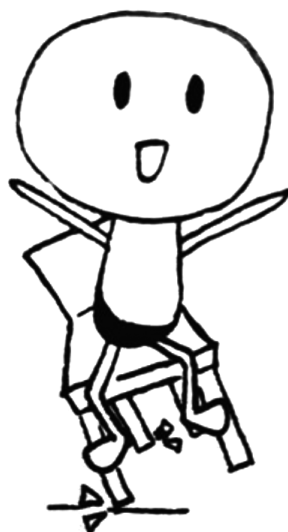
- **Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations**

If you have significant difficulty with speed of handwriting, reading fluency or spelling, you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations.

- **The DARE Programme**

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education.

DARE offers reduced points places to school leavers who, as a result of having a disability, have experienced additional educational challenges in second level education.



Positive Aspects of ADHD

Children and adolescents with ADHD will often be really friendly and enthusiastic. They often have a great sense of humour and fun. They are often creative, artistic and musical. They have lots of original ideas- they can think outside the box! They can be excellent at problem solving and thinking in innovative ways. ADHD can be an advantage in sports; because you have lots of energy and you might have more stamina than your peers.

Many famous people and celebrities have ADHD. To find out more see <https://addadult.com/add-education-centre/famous-people-with-adhd/>

ADHD is just one part of you. Every Adolescent with ADHD is unique and has their own strengths and talents.



Educating Adolescents on ADHD

Cork/Kerry Community CAMHS have a series of online educational workshops on ADHD for viewing by parents and Adolescents.

Access to the links for these recorded workshops will be given to you and your parents by your local CAMHS team once a diagnosis of ADHD has been confirmed.

Below is a list of the CAMHS ADHD information workshops for adolescents:

Workshop 1 – Understanding ADHD

Workshop 2 – Lived Experience of ADHD

Workshop 3 – Tips and Strategies to Promote Organisational skills, Support Homework and Reduce Stress

Workshop 4 – Speech, Language and Communication in ADHD

Videos and Podcasts on ADHD

Here are some video clips that you can watch which will help you understand a bit more about ADHD.

Podcast with Author Dr Thomas Brown on ADHD

<https://www.browнадhdclinic.com>

Video Explaining ADHD to Young people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rfcdx3qm77M>

‘ADHD and Me’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyaVKvuEBkk>

‘Let’s Talk about ADHD’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeamHE6Kank>

Information Resources, Training and Support Groups for ADHD

ADHD Ireland: Provides information, resources and training on ADHD for children, adolescents and adults.

Website: www.adhdireland.ie

Email: info@adhdireland.ie

Telephone: (01) 8748349

ADDISS UK: The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service is a UK charity which provides lots of information, resources and training on ADHD.

Website: www.addiss.co.uk

ADHD Foundation Neurodiversity Charity: UK based integrated health and education service.

Website: www.adhdfoundation.org.uk

ADDITUDE: Free online US magazine with links to latest research and best practice including free webinars and access to downloads from previous recordings on many topics.

Website: www.additudemag.com

CHADD: (Children and Adults with ADHD) a US based non-profit organisation which also provides resources and information on ADHD.

Website: www.chadd.org

Health Service Executive (HSE):

Website: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/a/adhd/>

NICE Guidelines: The current UK national guidance for ADHD can be found by searching on the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE Guidelines).

Website: www.nice.org.uk

INCADDS: The Irish National Council of ADHD support groups' is an umbrella organisation for ADHD support groups in Ireland.

Website: <https://www.incadds.ie/>

Email: info@incadds.ie

Living with ADHD UK: Information App with resources for teenagers, parents and teachers.

Website: <https://adhduk.co.uk>

ADHD Childhood: resources for ADHD in childhood

Website: <https://www.adhdchildhood.com>

Reading about ADHD

These are some books that you may find useful when looking for more information on ADHD. You may choose to read some of these books by yourself and then discuss with your parents or you may read some of these books together with a parent.



1. *'Putting on the Brakes: Young Peoples Guide to Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder'*,
by Patricia Quinn.
2. *'A Walk in the Rain with a Brain'*,
by Edward Hallowell.
3. *'Attention Girls! A Guide To Learn All About Your ADHD'*,
by Patricia Quinn.
4. *'Learning To Slow Down and Pay Attention: A Book for Kids about ADHD'*,
by Kathleen G. Nadeau.
5. *'The ADHD Workbook for Kids; Helping Children Gain Self – Confidence, Social Skills and Self Control'*,
by Laurence Shapiro.
6. *'I Would if I Could: A Teenagers Guide to ADHD/Hyperactivity'*,
by Michael Gordon.
7. *'Where's my stuff – The Ultimate Teen Organizing Guide'*,
by Samantha Schwartz.
8. *'The ADHD workbook for Teens'*,
by Lara Honos - Webb.

Notes