

ADHD

and transitioning into adolescence





NEW SCHOOL YEAR & NEW BEGINNINGS

Beginning a new school year. Entering high school. These events are important in the life of a child or teen. However, if your child has Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), you may be concerned about challenges that may arise. That's why it's important to work with your doctor to develop a monitoring plan for your child. The plan takes into consideration normal developmental changes in behavior over time, changes in expectations with each grade, and your child's interactions at home and school. This brochure and our Web site, www.ADHDSupport.com, are here as additional resources for you and your child along the way.

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ADHD SYMPTOMS MAY APPEAR DIFFERENTLY OVER TIME

While ADHD is usually diagnosed in childhood, the symptoms—inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity—may continue through adolescence and into adulthood. Adults and children may share the same symptoms of ADHD, but the way the symptoms appear may change over time.

As your child matures, some ADHD symptoms may become more subtle and less noticeable. By late childhood and early adolescence, hyperactivity symptoms, such as excessive running and climbing, may be less obvious. Teens and adults with ADHD may fidget with hands and feet, feel restless, and may have difficulty engaging in quiet activities.

Remember—only a trained health care provider can accurately diagnose and manage ADHD.



CHANGES FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE

The transition to middle school and high school

...can be challenging for children with ADHD. Students experience more than one classroom and teacher throughout the day. Classes get longer with less activity and become more lecture-style. Students may receive less individual attention from teachers as well.

Changes occurring outside of the classroom

The demands for independent work in high school may be greater and the amount of homework increases. There are higher expectations for being more independent, responsible, and organized. Moreover, teens become more involved with their physical appearance and socializing with their friends.

These changes that happen during childhood and into adolescence may make the diagnosis and management of ADHD more difficult. For example, adolescents may have a negative view of medication; adolescents may want to stop their medication as an act of independence from parents and doctors; and adolescents with ADHD may have an inaccurate view of their own symptoms. During this transition, it is important to work with your doctor to effectively manage your child's or adolescent's ADHD symptoms.

BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR STARTS...



Talk with a doctor about your child's total treatment plan

It is important to meet with your child's doctor periodically to assess the treatment plan. By initiating this conversation, you ensure that you and your doctor start planning for any upcoming transitions.

A total treatment plan may include behavioral therapy as well as medication.



Have your doctor evaluate your child's behavioral therapy plan

Experts state that a complete treatment plan for patients with ADHD may include medication and/or behavioral therapy. Examples of behavioral therapy include learning to better attend to your child's behaviors, establishing a home rewards system, and using time-out effectively, among other things. Ask your doctor if behavioral therapy is right for your child.



Have your doctor evaluate your child's medication plan

If your child has benefited from ADHD medication in the past but has stopped or is considering stopping, be sure to discuss this with your doctor. Your doctor is your best resource for advising you and evaluating your child's ADHD symptoms, as well as addressing any concerns you may have. During your periodic visits, the doctor may check:

- ⇒ If the medication is still effective and needed
- ⇒ If the dose is right for your child
- ⇒ If your child is experiencing any side effects
- ⇒ If the medication should be continued
- ⇒ Height, weight, blood pressure, pulse, and other health measures



Being proactive can help build support as your child transitions to a new school year

Each school year brings new teachers and schoolwork, changes that can be difficult for a child with ADHD. That is why any time your child goes through a significant change, like starting a new school, proactive planning for the transition may help.

Additional support may help your child deal with the transition. It's a good idea to arrange a meeting with a support team at the beginning of the school year: teachers, the guidance counselor, and the nurse and/or psychologist. They can work with you to establish your child's learning/behavioral goals and needs for the year. They will also evaluate whether special education services (eg, accommodations/interventions) may be necessary.



Tips for working with the school

Prepare for your meeting ahead of time by writing down what you'd like to discuss, including specific examples of your child's particular challenges. Write down notes, and save a copy for yourself and the teacher, so that you both have the same goals in mind for your child.

When developing a plan of action for teenagers, it becomes important from the start for them to be actively involved in the process of setting their course for the year. Teens should have input into the choices and decisions that will affect them in the future.



Talking to your child's teachers

When you meet with your child's or teen's teachers, it's best to be as prepared as possible. The questions below may be helpful for you as you talk with your child's teachers. You may have additional questions of your own.

- ⇒ How can we help my child organize homework and get assignments completed on time?
- ⇒ Would it be possible to break down assignments into smaller, more manageable steps?
- ⇒ Could the school counselor/psychologist provide support in addition to what you're doing in the classroom?
- ⇒ Is there extra work you'd suggest I do with my child after school or on weekends to help?
- ⇒ Do you think a change in seating could benefit my child?
- ⇒ Are there situations where my child's symptoms seem to worsen/improve?

TIPS FOR LEARNING GOAL-SETTING SKILLS...



Children

- ⇒ Give praise or rewards when rules are followed
- ⇒ Reward good behavior
- ⇒ Provide clear, consistent expectations, directions, and limits
- ⇒ Try to remain patient and calm when dealing with your child
- ⇒ Expect that children will have good days and bad days



Teens

- ⇒ Teens with ADHD may choose tasks or activities that provide instant gratification, rather than those that provide delayed rewards
 - ⇒ To help provide needed structure, set rules that are clear and easy to understand
 - ⇒ Help your teen stay focused and organized
 - ⇒ Post a chart listing household chores and responsibilities with spaces to check off completed items
- ⇒ Teens with or without ADHD want to be independent and try new things, and sometimes they will break rules
 - ⇒ If your teen breaks rules, your response should be as calm and matter-of-fact as possible
 - ⇒ Sometimes, a short time-out for your teen to calm down can be helpful



Additional Tips:

Help your child get organized



Designate specific areas for backpacks, toys, and clothing so these items will be less likely to get lost.



Create a plan for writing down homework and tests in an assignment notebook and for planning out long-term projects.



Color-code file folders, textbooks, binders, etc. Your child will find this useful in keeping materials for different subjects organized.



Help keep your child on track and on time

Timers and alarms—either through a clock, watch, PDA, or computer—can help with time management.



Keep it simple

Break down large, seemingly overwhelming projects or tasks into smaller, manageable steps.



Goals and rewards can be effective

Create a daily report card to encourage work completion.

EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

Should you decide to have your child evaluated for special services, you have several options. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are two federal laws that guarantee a free appropriate public education. The laws provide services or accommodations to eligible students with disabilities in the United States.



Section 504

For the student who will be able to learn with simple accommodations or only minor changes to his or her day, Section 504 is a good choice. A student is eligible for Section 504 if the child has a physical or mental condition that substantially limits a “major life activity,” including learning.

Section 504 accommodations may include:

- ⇒ Reducing the number of homework problems (without reducing the level or content taught)
- ⇒ Giving the student a quiet place to work, with limited distractions
- ⇒ Giving tests in a quiet place or providing extra time
- ⇒ Creating a notebook so that parents and teachers may keep each other informed of the child’s progress or difficulties
- ⇒ Giving clear or written directions for assignments
- ⇒ Providing the student with class notes in writing or allowing a tape recorder
- ⇒ Regular meetings with the school counselor
- ⇒ Using behavioral management techniques, including positive reinforcement, such as a reward system



IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that provides special education and related services needed for the child to benefit from her or his education. An individualized education program, sometimes called an individualized education plan or IEP, is designed specifically for each eligible child with disabilities to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

IDEA says that children with disabilities must be taught in the regular classroom as much as possible with appropriate related aids and services.

To qualify for IDEA, a child must meet the criteria of at least one of 13 disability categories. Children with ADHD may qualify under the Other Health Impairment (OHI) category or the Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) category.

When a child with ADHD qualifies under IDEA, the child receives an IEP. The IEP is a written document that includes specific goals for the child based on her or his current level of performance.

Your child's school may also have brochures or handouts explaining what kind of rights your child has. Ask for whatever paperwork they have available.

For more information on Section 504 and eligibility, visit:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

For more information on IDEA and eligibility, visit: <http://idea.ed.gov/>

YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK...

You are on your way to obtaining the information and tools that can help you ease the transition experience for your child or teen. Additional resources to assist you are given below.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)

PO Box 7557

Wilmington, DE 19803-9997

Phone: 1-800-939-1019

www.add.org

National Resource Center on ADHD: A Program of Children and Adults With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

8181 Professional Place, Suite 150

Landover, MD 20785

Phone: 1-800-233-4050

www.chadd.org or www.help4adhd.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

3803 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 100

Arlington, VA 22203

Phone: 1-703-524-7600

Member services: 1-888-999-NAMI (6264)

Information helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

www.nami.org

ADHD Coaches Organization (ACO)

ACO 701 Hunting Place

Baltimore, MD 21229

Phone: 1-888-638-3999

www.adhdcoaches.org

Section 504 and Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

or <http://idea.ed.gov/>

⇒ For more information on ADHD, speak with your doctor or visit www.ADHDsupport.com today.

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