

A Guide for Parents

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ADD - ADHD
[SUPPORT]

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ADD - ADHD
Attention Deficit *Hyperactivity* Disorder

A Guide
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*ADD-ADHD Support in Cyprus would like to thank
all of the parents, teachers, doctors and specialists around the world
who work everyday to raise ADD-ADHD awareness.*

You're our inspiration.

*We'd also like to thank all the ADD-ADHD Support members
and partners who have volunteered so much of their time
and energy to sustain ADD-ADHD Support
and make this booklet and all of our work in Cyprus possible.*

*Susan J. Chrysostomou
President & Founder*

Our association offers:

- **Lectures**
- **Seminars**
- **Support Groups**
- **Guidance/Coaching**
- **Advocacy**

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Note: ADD, ADHD and AD/HD are used interchangeably throughout this publication to preserve the integrity of the work created by others and cited herein.

The Disorder Named AD/HD

What is AD/HD?

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is characterized by developmentally inappropriate impulsivity, attention, and in some cases, hyperactivity. AD/HD is a neurobiological disorder that affects 3-5% of school-age children.

What are the symptoms?

Typically, AD/HD symptoms arise in early childhood. Some symptoms persist into adulthood and may pose life-long challenges.

AD/HD predominantly inattentive type:

- *Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes.*
- *Has difficulty sustaining attention.*
- *Does not appear to listen.*
- *Struggles to follow through on instructions.*
- *Has difficulty with organization.*
- *Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort.*
- *Loses things.*
- *Is easily distracted.*
- *Is forgetful in daily activities.*

AD/HD predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type:

- *Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair.*
- *Has difficulty remaining seated.*
- *Runs about or climbs excessively.*
- *Difficulty engaging in activities quietly.*
- *Acts as if driven by a motor.*
- *Talks excessively.*
- *Blurts out answers before questions have been completed.*
- *Difficulty waiting or taking turns.*
- *Interrupts or intrudes upon others.*

AD/HD combined type:

- *Individual meets both sets of inattention and hyperactive/impulsive criteria.*

What are the diagnostic criteria?

Because everyone shows signs of these behaviours at one time or another, the guidelines for determining whether a person has AD/HD are very specific. To be diagnosed with AD/HD, individuals must exhibit six of the nine characteristics in either or both categories listed above.

In children and teenagers, the symptoms must be more frequent or severe than in other children the same age. In addition, the behaviours must create significant difficulty in at least two areas of life, such as home, social settings, school or work.

How do I have my child evaluated?

Determining if a child has AD/HD is a multifaceted process. Many biological and psychological problems can contribute to symptoms similar to those exhibited by children with AD/HD. For example, anxiety, depression and certain types of learning disabilities may cause similar symptoms.

There is no single test to diagnose AD/HD. A comprehensive evaluation is necessary and should include a clinical assessment of the individual's academic, social and emotional functioning and developmental level. A careful history should be taken from the parents, teachers and when appropriate, the child. Checklists for rating AD/HD symptoms and ruling out other disabilities are often used by clinicians.

There are several types of professionals who can diagnose AD/HD including school psychologists, private psychologists, social workers, nurse practitioners, neurologists, psychiatrists and other medical doctors. Regardless of who does the evaluation, the use of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV* criteria is necessary. Only medical doctors can prescribe medication if it is needed.

Parenting a Child with AD/HD

Parenting a child with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or any disability, can be overwhelming at times. All parents sometimes feel anger, fear, grief, frustration, and fatigue while struggling to help their child. However, parents needn't waste limited emotional energy on self-blame. AD/HD is a hereditary disorder, and is not caused by poor parenting or a chaotic environment.

Although life with your child may at times seem challenging, it is important to remember that children with AD/HD can and do succeed. As a parent, you can help create home and school environments that improve your child's chances for success. Early intervention is the key to maximizing positive outcomes for your child.

1. Seek up-to-date, scientifically supported information about AD/HD.

- Be careful of ads claiming to "cure" AD/HD. Currently, there is no cure.
- Be a good consumer. Distinguish between "accurate" and "inaccurate" information.
- Educate other adults in your child's life about the disorder. Relatives, teachers and caretakers need to understand that AD/HD is neurobiological – your child's brain works a bit differently – and it is not the result of too much sugar or too little discipline. They also need to know how they can help your child meet expectations for performance and behaviour.

2. Seek a professional evaluation and treatment.

- When looking for a professional, ask questions related to diagnosis and treatment. How many clients have the disorder? What methods will they use to evaluate the child? What types of treatment do they support?
- Effective treatment involves the use of a multimodal approach that includes an appropriate educational programme; behaviour modification; parent, child and teacher education; and sometimes counseling and medication (Please refer to the ADD-ADHD Support leaflet on Medication for more information.)

3. Seek to become your child's best advocate.

- Represent and protect your child's best interest in school situations, both academic and behavioural.
- Know your child's rights.

4. Seek parent training from a qualified mental health professional experienced in AD/HD.

- Parenting a child with AD/HD can be frustrating and exhausting. You may find that approaches which work well for your other children do not work for your child with AD/HD.
- Seek effective parent training that will teach you strategies to change behaviours and improve your relationship with your child (see the next section for tips on getting started).

5. Seek support for yourself.

- Attend parent support meetings, to share information and give/receive emotional support.
- The constant high level of parenting required can take a toll on even the very best parents. Seek counseling if you begin to feel overwhelmed or defeated.

6. Tell your child that you love and support him or her unconditionally.

- There will be days when you may not believe this yourself. Those will be the days when it is even more important that you acknowledge the difficulties your child faces on a daily basis, and express your love. Let your child know that you will get through the rough and the smooth times together.

ADD: Beyond the Myths

Myth: Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) does not really exist. It is simply the latest excuse for parents who do not discipline their children.

Fact: Scientific research tells us ADD is a biologically-based disorder that includes distractibility, impulsiveness, and sometimes hyperactivity.

Myth: Children with ADD are no different from their peers; all children have a hard time sitting still and paying attention.

Fact: Before children are considered to have ADD, they must show symptoms that demonstrate behaviour greatly different from what is expected for children of their age and background. The behaviour must be causing significant social, academic, or occupational impairment for the child to be diagnosed educationally as having ADD.

Myth: Only a few people really have ADD.

Fact: Estimates of who has ADD range from 3-5% of the school age population. While boys outnumber girls by 4:1 to 9:1, experts believe that many girls with ADD are never diagnosed.

Myth: ADD can be prevented.

Fact: While scientists are not certain they understand the causes of ADD, they have ruled out most of the factors controlled by parents. A poor diet does not cause ADD; nor does sugar or food additives. Since the causes of ADD are genetic and biological, the parents cannot cause ADD by being too strict or too lenient. However, actions by the parents can influence the child's ability to control his or her ADD behaviour.

Myth: All children with ADD are hyperactive and have learning disabilities.

Fact: While 10-33 percent of children with ADD also have learning disabilities, the two cause different problems for children. ADD

primarily affects the behaviour of the child – causing inattention and impulsivity – while learning disabilities primarily affect the child's ability to learn – mainly in processing information.

Not all students with ADD are hyperactive and constantly in motion. Because these children do not behave in the same way as hyperactive ADD students, their disorder frequently is not recognized, and they are often considered as unmotivated or lazy.

Myth: Medication can cure students with ADD.

Fact: Medicine cannot cure ADD but can sometimes temporarily moderate its effects. While medication can be incorporated into other treatment strategies, parents and teachers should not use medication as the sole method of helping the child.

Myth: The longer you wait to deal with ADD in students, the better the chances are that they will outgrow it.

Fact: ADD symptoms continue into adolescence for 50-80% of the children with ADD. Many of them, between 30-50%, will still have ADD as adults.

Myth: There is little parents and teachers can do to control the behaviour of children with ADD.

Fact: Teachers and parents have successfully used positive reinforcement procedures to increase desirable behaviours. A behavioural modification plan can give the child more privileges and independence as the child's behaviour improves. Mild, short, immediate reprimands can counter and decrease negative and undesirable behaviours. Students with ADD can learn to follow classroom rules when there are pre-established consequences for misbehaviour, rules are enforced consistently and immediately, and encouragement is given at home and in school.

How to Parent Children with ADHD/ADD

Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – ADHD/ADD may be difficult to parent. Here are some things you can do to help:

Organise your schedule at home. Set up specific times for waking up, eating, playing, doing homework, doing chores, watching TV or playing video games and going to bed. Write the schedule on a blackboard or a piece of paper and hang it where your child will always see it. Explain any changes in routine in advance. Make sure your child understands the changes.

Set up house rules. Make the rules of behaviour for the family simple, clear and short. Rules should be explained clearly. It's important to explain what will happen when the rules are obeyed and when they are broken. Write down the rules and results of not following them. Hang this list next to the schedule. The punishment for breaking rules should be fair, quick and consistent.

Be positive. Tell your child what you want rather than what you don't want. Reward your child regularly for any good behaviour – even little things such as getting dressed and closing doors quietly. Children with ADHD often spend most of their day being told what they are doing wrong. They need to be praised for good behaviour.

Make sure your directions are understood. First, get your child's attention. Look directly into his or her eyes. Then tell your child in a clear, calm voice specifically just what you want. Ask your child to repeat the directions back to you. It's usually better to keep directions simple and short. For difficult tasks, give only one or two directions at a time. Then congratulate your child when he or she completes each step.

Be consistent. Only promise what you will deliver. Do what you say you are going to do. Repeating directions and request many times doesn't work well. When your child breaks the rules, warn only once in a quiet voice. If the warning does not work, follow through with punishment that you promised.

Help with school activities. School mornings may be difficult for children with ADHD. Get ready the night before – lay out school clothes and get the

book bag ready. Allow enough time for your child to get dressed and eat a good breakfast. If your child is really slow in the mornings, it's important to make enough time to dress and eat.

Set up home routine. Pick a regular place for doing homework. This place should be away from distractions such as other people, television and video games. Break homework into small parts and have breaks. For example, give your child a snack after school and then let him play for a few minutes. Then start homework time. Stop frequently for short "fun breaks" that allow your child to do something enjoyable. Give your child lots of encouragement, but let your child do the schoolwork.

Focus on effort, not grades. Network regularly with your child's teachers and caregivers. Make sure they understand that your child needs them to recognise and appreciate effort and improvement (refer them to ADD-ADHD: A Guide for Teachers by ADD-ADHD Support). Reward your child at home when he tries to finish schoolwork, not just for good grades. You can give extra rewards for earning better grades.

Pointers

- **Take the time to listen to your children as much as you can (really try to get their "message").**
- **Love them by touching them, hugging them, tickling them, wrestling with them (they need lots of physical contact).**
- **Look for and encourage their strengths, interests and abilities. Help them to use these as compensations for any limitations or disabilities.**
- **Reward them with praise, good words, smiles, and pats on the back as often as you can.**
- **Accept them for what they are and for their human potential for growth and development. Be realistic in your expectations and demands.**
- **Involve them in establishing rules and regulations, schedules, and family activities.**
- **Tell them when they misbehave and explain how you feel about their behaviour; then have them propose other more acceptable ways of behaving..**

ADD-ADHD Resources

- Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)
<http://www.add.org/>
- Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS)
<http://www.addiss.co.uk/>
- ADD Helpline (for parents)
<http://www.addhelpline.org/>
- ADD Warehouse (online catalogue of ADD resources)
<http://www.addwarehouse.com/>
- Child Development Institute
<http://cdipage.com/>
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
<http://www.chadd.org/>
- Learning Disabilities Association of America
<http://www.ldaamerica.org/>
- LDOnline (Learning Disabilities Online)
<http://ldonline.org/>
- National Institute of Mental Health
<http://nimh.nih.gov/>