



<https://www.caddra.ca/public-information/children/>

## ADHD and Children...

### What is ADHD?

ADHD stands for *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*. It means that your brain may work a little differently from other children's brains. You are just as smart as everyone else, but the flow of messages in your brain may not work as smoothly or as fast. Just like someone who has to wear glasses to help them see better, you may need a little help to pay attention better. Usually children with ADHD have problems *paying attention in school* and *getting their work done*. They may also have trouble *switching their activities* or *changing what they are thinking about*. Especially if they are doing something they find very interesting like playing a computer game! Some children notice that they are not able to stop and think things through before they do them. This is called *being impulsive*. Sometimes this can get them into trouble. Some children with ADHD also find it hard to sit or stand still for a period of time. This is called *being hyperactive*.

### How did I get ADHD?

You can't catch ADHD like a cold or the flu. Most of the time ADHD is something that you are born with. It is passed down to you from your parents. Not always, but very often, one of your parents will also have ADHD. Sometimes your brother or sister, or cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents may have ADHD as well.

About 6 to 9 people in every 100 people throughout the whole world have ADHD.

### How does ADHD affect children?

Some children with ADHD say that it feels like their brain is always moving very fast from one thing to another, sort of like a remote switching channels on a TV very quickly. Other children daydream a lot and find it hard to stay focused on their schoolwork. This doesn't mean they don't know as much as other children, it just means it may be harder for them to stick to things and get them done. It may even be hard to start their work without the help of teacher or parents.

If you have ADHD, you might have trouble remembering where you put things or when you have to get things done. Sometimes you might get distracted. This means that you start to do something, but your mind thinks or sees something else that catches its attention and you forget what you were doing. You might also have a hard time falling asleep at night. People with ADHD often find it hard to turn off the ideas in their mind so that they can relax enough to fall asleep.

When these things happen you may get frustrated, especially if you don't know why it is happening. When children with ADHD get frustrated, they sometimes get very angry and don't know how to deal with it. They may yell and do things that they don't mean to do.

ADHD may make it harder for you to control your feelings, but remember that ADHD is never an excuse for hurting other people. There are many things that you can learn to do that will help you deal with your emotions.

## Do I have to take pills?

Many children with ADHD take medication to help them pay attention in school and to help with their hyperactivity. Medication can help your brain to stay focused on what you want it to work on. You may find it easier to ignore distractions. It can also help you to slow down so you can think before making decisions about what to do. You may not have to take medication all the time, but it can often help you with activities outside of school. You need to pay attention when you take part in a sports teams, karate, cubs, brownies, pathfinders, music lessons, camp and even when you are just playing with your friends.

No one likes to take medication if they don't have to, just like children don't wear glasses if they don't need to! Of course, glasses can help some people to see better, and if they don't wear them they can miss a lot of things. In the same way, children who need medication for their ADHD can also miss out on many things if they can't pay attention.

When you do take medication for your ADHD it doesn't mean it will cure your ADHD, but it can help you. Taking medication can help you to think better, or at least think about what you need to so you can get things done.

## What about school?

Your school needs to know about your ADHD so they can help you. Having ADHD does not mean that you are stupid or lazy. It just means that your brain works a little differently. ADHD does not have anything to do with how smart you are. ADHD children are just as smart as other children. If your teachers know about your ADHD they can do things to help you like: give you a quiet place to work, make sure that you know what to do, give you extra time to get your work done, and help you to get started on your work and finish it. They can help you to remember things by giving you tools like a homework book or a homework buddy.

By sending notes home to your parents, teachers can let them know how you are doing and what you need to finish. Your parents can also send notes to your teachers or talk to them so that everyone can work together to help you. Teachers and parents can also help you to understand the rules and find ways to not get into trouble. They can also teach you how to get along with the other children and teachers. There are many other things that you can learn to do to help with your ADHD and lots of things that your teachers and parents can help you with.

- Sometimes putting on headphones when you are trying to work on schoolwork can help you to concentrate.
- It may be much easier for you to type on a computer keyboard than it is to write by hand. Learning to keyboard is a good thing for children with ADHD.
- We know that having a routine, or doing the same thing at the same time every day can be very helpful for ADHD children.
- Having a quiet place to calm down or someone to talk to when you get frustrated can help you to stop yourself from blowing up.

## How do I tell my friends about ADHD?

You might be a little different than other children, but your friends probably already know that. It might even be why they like you! Being different is not always a bad thing. It can also mean that you have more energy and can think in different creative ways than other children do. You can show your friends this information if you like, and there are also many good books for children to read that explain ADHD. Maybe your parents can help to explain ADHD to your family and friends, and maybe your teacher can help to explain

it to other students. Everyone has things they are good at and other things they are not so good at. ADHD just means that paying attention and staying quiet and sitting still may be something that you need help with. You may be a whiz at math or sports and some of the other children may not be good those things at all.

## What do I need to do?

There are many things you can do to help with your ADHD and there are many things that your Mom and Dad and your teacher can help you with. The first thing everyone needs to do is the same as you are doing right now...they need to learn about you and your ADHD. When your parents, family, and teachers, know about ADHD, it will be easier for them to understand you and know how they can help you. For example:

- Is it easier for you to work when you are in a quiet room or do you work better if you have music on at the same time? It helps if parents, teachers and know what kinds of things distract you.
- Talking to your parents, teachers and your doctors about how you are feeling is a good thing. They need to know when you get frustrated and what helps you to calm down.

You may not think this will be much fun, but working with and listening to your parents and teachers may be the best thing that you can do. They really do want to help and the more that you can teach them about yourself and your ADHD the better they will be able to do this. Everyone needs to work as a team to figure out solutions.

The good thing is that you get to be part of the team too!