

My Child Has Been Diagnosed with ADHD - Now What?

It is understandable for parents to have concerns when their child is diagnosed with ADHD, especially about treatments. It is important for parents to remember that while ADHD can't be cured, it can be successfully managed. There are many treatment options, so parents and doctors should work closely with everyone involved in the child's treatment.

New Data

Treatment of ADHD among Children with Special Health Care Needs

The Journal of Pediatrics has published that in most cases, ADHD is best treated with a combination of behavior therapy and medication. Good treatment plans will include close monitoring, follow-ups and any changes needed along the way.

Following are treatment options for ADHD:

- Medications
- Behavioral Therapy strategies
- Parent training
- School accommodations and interventions

Behavioral Therapy

Research shows that behavioral therapy is an important part of treatment for children with ADHD. ADHD affects not only a child's ability to pay attention or sit still at school, it also affects relationships with family and how well they do in their classes. Behavioral therapy is a treatment option that can help reduce these problems for children and should be started as soon as a diagnosis is made.

Following are examples that might help with your child's behavioral therapy:

- **Create a routine.** Try to follow the same schedule every day, from wake-up time to bedtime.
- **Get organized.** Put schoolbags, clothing, and toys in the same place every day so your child will be less likely to lose them.
- **Avoid distractions.** Turn off the TV, radio, and computer, especially when your child is doing homework.
- **Limit choices.** Offer a choice between two things (this outfit, meal, toy, etc., or that one) so that your child isn't overwhelmed and overstimulated.
- **Change your interactions with your child.** Instead of long-winded explanations and cajoling, use clear, brief directions to remind your child of responsibilities.
- **Use goals and rewards.** Use a chart to list goals and track positive behaviors, then reward your child's efforts. Be sure the goals are realistic—baby steps are important!
- **Discipline effectively.** Instead of yelling or spanking, use timeouts or removal of privileges as consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- **Help your child discover a talent.** All kids need to experience success to feel good about themselves. Finding out what your child does well — whether it's sports, art, or music — can boost social skills and self-esteem.

Behavior Treatment for Preschoolers

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that doctors prescribe Behavior Therapy Interventions as the first line of treatment for preschool-aged children (4–5 years of age) with ADHD as well as preschoolers with disruptive tendencies. Parents or teachers can provide this treatment.

The A states that effective parenting programs help parents develop a positive relationship with their child, teach them about how children develop, and help them manage negative behavior with positive discipline. They found four programs for parents of preschoolers that include these key components:

- [Triple P \(Positive Parenting Program\)](#),
- [Incredible Years Parenting Program](#)
- [Parent-Child Interaction Therapy](#)
- New Forest Parenting Program—Developed specifically for parents of children with ADHD [[Abstract](#)] [[Authors](#)]

Medications



Medication can help a child with ADHD in their everyday life and may be a valuable part of a child’s treatment. Medication is an option that may help control some of the behavior problems that have led to trouble in the past with family, friends and at school.

Several different types of medications may be used to treat ADHD:

- **Stimulants** are the best-known and most widely used treatments. Between 70-80 percent of children with ADHD respond positively to these medications.
- **Nonstimulants** were approved for treating ADHD in 2003. This medication seems to have fewer side effects than stimulants and can last up to 24 hours.

Medications can affect children differently, where one child may respond well to one medication, but not another. When determining the best treatment, the doctor might try different medications and doses, so it is important to work with your child’s doctor to find the medication that works best for your child.

For more information on treatments, please click one of the following links:

[National Resource Center on ADHD](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health](#)

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Parent Education and Support

Parent education and support are other important parts of treatment for a child with ADHD. Children with ADHD might not respond as well as other children to the usual parenting practices, so experts recommend additional parent education. This approach has been successful in teaching parents how to help their children become better organized, develop problem-solving skills, and cope with their ADHD symptoms.

Parent education can be conducted in groups or with individual families and is offered by therapists or in special classes. Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) offers a unique educational program to help parents and individuals with ADHD navigate the challenges of ADHD across the lifespan. Find more information about CHADD's "Parent to Parent" program by visiting [CHADD's website](#).

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ADHD and the Classroom

Just like with parent training, it is important for teachers to have the needed skills to help children manage their ADHD. However, since the majority of children with ADHD are not enrolled in special education classes, their teachers will most likely be regular education teachers who might know very little about ADHD and could benefit from assistance and guidance. [Learn more about how to help a child with attention and learning issues.](#)

Here are some tips to share with teachers for classroom success:

- Use a homework folder for parent-teacher communications
- Make assignments clear
- Give positive reinforcement
- Be sensitive to self-esteem issues
- Involve the school counselor or psychologist

What Every Parent Should Know...

As your child's most important advocate, you should become familiar with your child's medical, legal, and educational rights. Kids with ADHD might be eligible for [special services](#) or accommodations at school under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and an anti-discrimination law known as Section 504.