



## What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurobehavioral disorder characterized by difficulty paying attention, excessive activity, and impulsivity. These symptoms can interfere with a child's ability to perform in school, function at home, and develop and maintain friendships. ADHD can also affect teenagers and adults if it goes untreated in childhood.

## What Causes ADHD?

Research has shown that ADHD is likely due to many genes and their interaction with the environment. Though they require further research, some substances in the environment that may be linked to the development of ADHD include low birth weight, alcohol, cigarette smoke, or exposure to toxins in the environment such as lead.

## Who is Affected by ADHD?

ADHD is usually identified when children are in grade school but can be diagnosed at any time from preschool to adulthood. Symptoms in young adults may include procrastinating, managing time poorly, easily losing one's temper, making hasty decisions, or having trouble maintaining steady work or relationships.

## For more information about ADHD:

American Academy of Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatry (AACAP)  
3615 Wisconsin Ave., NW  
Washington DC, 20016-3007  
202-966-7300  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

American Psychiatric Association (APA)  
1000 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1825  
Arlington, VA 22209  
703-907-7300  
[www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

Children and Adults with Attention-  
Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)  
8181 Professional Place, Suite 150  
Landover, MD 20785  
1-800-233-4050  
<http://www.chadd.org>

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
3803 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 100  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-524-7600  
<http://www.nami.org>

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)  
141 Northwest Point Boulevard  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098  
847-434-4000  
[www.aap.org/](http://www.aap.org/)

*The information contained in this guide is not intended as, and is not a substitute for, professional medical advice. All decisions about clinical care should be made in consultation with a child's treatment team. No pharmaceutical funding was used in the development or maintenance of this guide.*

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## ADHD Parents Medication Guide

## Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

This medication guide is intended to help youngsters with ADHD and their families to better understand the treatments for ADHD.

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& Adolescent Psychiatry  
and  
American Psychiatric  
Association

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## What Types of Treatments are Effective?

Large scale treatment studies have shown that stimulant medications may be the most effective for treatment children with symptoms of ADHD. However, combining behavioral treatments such as parent training, child-focused treatment, and school-based intervention with medications enabled children with ADHD to take lower doses of medicine. There are also other types of medications available for individuals with ADHD.

### Potential Consequences when ADHD is Left Untreated

- Increased risk for school failure and dropout in both high school and college
- Behavior and discipline problems
- Social difficulties and family strife
- Accidental injury
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders
- Employment problems
- Driving accidents
- Unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases
- Delinquency, criminality, and arrest

## Which Medication is Right for My Child?

Doctors may need to try more than one ADHD medication to find one that works best for your child. Some may reduce the symptoms of ADHD but may produce side effects. For stimulants

these may include reduced appetite, problems sleeping, headaches, and stomach pain. Parent and teacher monitoring of positive and negative effects will increase the chances of learning about which medications are best for a child, at which dose, and whether medications should be used alone or in combination with one another.



### What Types of Medication Are Available?

- Stimulant Medications (e.g. Adderall, Ritalin, and Concerta)
- Non-Stimulant Medications (e.g. Strattera, Intuiv, Kapvay)

Medications such as bupropion, modafinil, desipramine, and imipramine, may also be prescribed “off label,” if other medications are not helpful or if the side effects of those medications cannot be tolerated.

### Side Effects of ADHD Medications

Common side effects from stimulant medications include reduced appetite, weight loss, headaches, problems sleeping, and stomach pain. For non-stimulant medication, there may be a drop in heart rate and blood

pressure, fainting, dizziness, drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, and dry mouth. All side effects should be reported to your child’s doctor—especially if they interfere with your child’s everyday activities. There are often ways to manage these side effects.

### How Do I Know that My Child’s Medication is Working?

Parents and teachers should notice beneficial effects of stimulant medication in 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the dose and the formulation



used. The results can be dramatic in children with symptoms of hyperactivity but less obvious in children with attention problems. With a non-stimulant, it often takes a couple of weeks before the full therapeutic effects of the medication begin to unfold. In general, when ADHD medication is working, many of the ADHD symptoms will lessen in severity. Behavioral therapy may help with any remaining symptoms.

### Home & School Strategies for Your Child

- Have the same routine every day.
- Organize everyday items.
- Use organizers for homework.
- Keep rules simple, clear, and consistent.