



Massachusetts General Hospital  
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham

The Clay Center for  
Young Healthy Minds

## ADHD: Ways to Support Your Child at Home

If your child has been diagnosed with ADHD, there are ways to help them manage. In addition to any professional support receive, below are tips to help you better understand their behaviors and support them at home.

**Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is one of the most common disorders in children. It's also very treatable. To receive an ADHD diagnosis, your child's behavior must meet certain criteria. See our list here: <https://bit.ly/ADHD-Symptoms>

1. **Set Up and Maintain Daily Routines.** Daily routines are useful for kids and teens with ADHD. Posting a schedule in a visible place can help younger kids get activities done successfully, while encouraging teens to create their own lists can help them learn to stay organized. Examples:
  - Morning Routine: Include steps like waking up on time, getting dressed, eating breakfast, packing up bag, and getting out the door on time if it is a school day.
  - Completing Homework: Include steps like reviewing the assignment, clearing a workspace, prepping items for the assignment (paper/pen, books), and setting aside time to do the work.
2. **Make Transitions Predictable.** Kids with ADHD are often late and can have a hard time switching gears from one activity to the next, like ending play and getting to the dinner table. To help make transitions easier and increase their organization skills, try setting an alarm for 10 minutes in advance, with a 5-minute warning. When time is up, announce it in an upbeat, positive way.
3. **Offer Positive Language to Support Self-Esteem.** Inattention, impulsivity, and other behaviors can make it hard for kids with ADHD to complete what's expected. This can cause conflict with teachers, friends, even parents – which can cause the child to feel they are regularly letting others down. To bolster self-esteem and encourage continued positive behaviors, praise your child freely when they succeed in a task or transition.
4. **Minimize Distractions.** Maintaining focus can be hard for kids with ADHD, so try to lessen distractions. For example, help your child keep their desk or play area orderly so it's easier to focus on single activities. If you ask your child to complete a task, try to give them a space that's familiar and uncluttered – even things like noise from a TV, or other people doing tasks nearby, can be distracting.
5. **Encourage Exercise!** Typically, kids and teens with ADHD have lots of energy. They often feel calmer and more attentive when they get daily exercise. Think of creative ways to help them fit in physical activity – walking to school, if possible, joining a sports team, attending classes like gymnastics or martial arts, or even having space at home for jumping, dancing, or a basketball hoop.
6. **Encourage Healthy Sleep.** Falling asleep can be difficult for kids and teens with ADHD, and when they don't get enough it makes paying attention and controlling impulsive behavior even harder. Ways to help: 1) a regular and early bedtime; 2) reading before bed; 3) music or audio books for a calming effect; 4) no screentime before bed or in the bedroom; and 5) limiting caffeine during the day from soda or chocolate.
7. **Plan Ahead.** Kids with ADHD often experience extreme impatience – when they can't have or complete something they want immediately, it can feel overwhelming and may result in a meltdown. Planning ahead for various experiences can be helpful. Talk in advance about strategies for situations that may be stressful, or think of problem-solving tools for hands-on projects like building a LEGO® set or doing math homework.

**Thanks for all you do to support a young person in your life. It really makes a difference.**

For more resources on ADHD and other topics, visit us online: [mghclaycenter.org/topics/learning-issues](https://mghclaycenter.org/topics/learning-issues)

