

Learning About ADHD in Teens

What's it like to have ADHD?

If you've had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) since you were a kid, you may know the symptoms.

People with ADHD may have a **hard time paying attention**. It might be hard to finish projects that you are not into, and you might be obsessed with things you really like doing. It can be hard to follow conversations or to focus on friends. You may not like reading for very long. You may be bored with some kinds of jobs. You may forget or lose things.

People with ADHD may be **impulsive** and act before they think. You might make quick decisions like spending too much money or driving too fast.

And people with ADHD can be **hyperactive**. You might fidget and feel "revved up." It might be hard to relax.

Now that you are a teen, you can learn more about your own ADHD. As you get older and take on more responsibilities—like driving, getting a job, dating, and spending more time away from home—it's even more important to manage your ADHD. ADHD is a condition that you can manage. The symptoms don't have to define you as a person. You can figure out how to take care of your ADHD with the right plan at school, the right support at home and, if needed, the right medicine.

How do you manage ADHD?

You can manage your ADHD by keeping your schoolwork and your life better organized, by talking to a counselor, and by taking medicine if your doctor recommends it.

ADHD medicines include stimulants, nonstimulants, antihypertensives, and antidepressants. The right medicine can help you be more calm and focused. It can help with relationships. But some medicines have side effects. These side effects include headaches, loss of appetite, and sleep problems or drowsiness. And it's important to know that the effects of using these medicines for long periods of time haven't been studied.

- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Don't share or sell your medicine or take ADHD medicine that's not yours. Sharing or selling ADHD medicine is a big problem among teens. It's illegal and dangerous.

Find a counselor you like and trust. Be open and honest in your talks. Be willing to make some changes.

Remove distractions at home, work, and school. Keep the spaces where you do your work neat and clear. Try to plan your time in an organized way.

How can you deal with ADHD at school?

You can speak up for yourself at school. Talk to your teachers about your ADHD at the start of the school year and when your schedule changes with a new semester. Make a plan with your teachers so that you can get the most out of school. This might include setting routines for homework and activities and taking tests in quiet spaces. And look for apps, videos, and podcasts to help you study.

It might help to study in short bursts and to take lots of breaks. Practice making lists of things you need to do. Think about getting a daily planner, or use a scheduling app on your smartphone or tablet. These tools can help you stay organized. You can also talk to your parents, teachers, or a school counselor if you have problems in any of your classes.

Practice staying focused in class. Take good notes. Underline or highlight important information, and think ahead. Keep lots of highlighters, pens, and pencils around if that helps you stay focused.

Find subjects you like in school, and sign up for those classes. And don't forget to set free time for yourself to be active and have some fun. Try out a new sport, or take a class in art, drama, or music.

When it's time to apply to colleges or make plans for after high school, think about your needs. If you are going to college, think about the size of the school. What medical and tutoring services do they offer? What are the living arrangements like? And think about which careers are the best fit for you.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

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