



Home and Family Strategies: ADHD

This Quick Fact Sheet contains strategies designed to address potential symptoms of ADHD in children and should be used in consultation and collaboration with your child's pediatrician, psychiatrist, and/or mental health personnel or as part of a larger intervention approach. These pages contain only a portion of many possible strategies available to address symptoms of ADHD. Strategies should always be individualized and implemented with careful consideration of the differences of each child and the context of their individual circumstances. Additionally, this information should never be used to formulate a diagnosis. Mental health and/or medical diagnoses should be made only by trained professionals after a thorough evaluation.

If you notice a significant change in mood in your child that lasts for more than a week, share your observations with your child's pediatrician and school's mental health support team

General Comments About ADHD Intervention

Effective parenting of children with ADHD requires a multi-disciplinary, multi-pronged approach. Through the collaborative work of the Vermont ADHD Initiative, successful referral, assessment, and treatment protocols have been developed for children, youth, and families in Vermont. For a summary of these protocols and the work of the Vermont ADHD Initiative, go to:

http://www.uvm.edu/medicine/vchip/documents/VCHIP_NARRATIVE_01_12_05.pdf

One key to success for children with ADHD is partnership between families, physicians, mental health professionals, and schools. Through providing safe and supportive home and school environments, effective and responsive academic instruction, behavioral intervention, and appropriate accommodations, caregivers and school teams can increase the opportunity for children with ADHD to achieve academic success and overall, life-long well-being. Families and schools should maintain high expectations for children with ADHD and must also be patient, creative, flexible, and willing to try new or alternative approaches. Below are some possible strategies to support children with ADHD.

Home and Family Strategies for Inattention

- Have the child move to a location in the house with the least extraneous stimuli when doing homework or other tasks
- Nurture relationships with positive role models (peers, family members, etc.) who have a high capacity for attention and concentration
- Limit noise distraction by placing tennis balls or pads under your child's chair and desk feet
- Use a variety of auditory signals (e.g. bell, music) to cue child to transitions or need to focus attention
- Use a combination of audio, visual, and tactile approaches when teaching or interacting with your child
- Allow the child to work on computer when possible
- To gain child's attention, highlight key points, both verbally and visually
- Be sure to have the child's attention before giving oral directions; give only one direction at a time; speak in short, simple sentences; provide a visual support for oral directions when possible (e.g. written chores or household/family rules)
- Develop a discreet, non-shaming way for the child to ask for or get clarification on missed parent requests or to cue the child when s/he is off task
- Check in frequently with the child; provide lots of genuine praise and/or acknowledgment
- Provide accommodations for homework and/or chore completion (i.e. low-stimulus location, extended time)



Home and Family Strategies for Disorganization

- Set clear household routines and rules and practice them over and over and over
- Keep a family calendar posted in an easy to see place; refer to the family schedule often; when activities are completed, cross them off the schedule
- Use a variety of auditory signals to cue the child to transitions (i.e. bell, music)
- Bring attention to and explain your own organizational methods to provide your child with concrete examples
- Teach your child to use an assignment book to organize his or her work
- Refer to assignment book daily; show child your datebook as an example
- Ensure your child is copying classroom assignments into his or her assignment book
- Provide child with multi-colored folders to use for different household art projects or school subjects
- Have the child explain how s/he plans to organize an assignment or initiate an activity before getting started
- Have clearly understood, consistently used organizational systems throughout the house
- Allow time for bedroom, closet, and backpack organization; provide daily “check in” time to make sure the child has what s/he needs
- Chunk chores/tasks into small, achievable parts
- Keep one set of school materials at home

Home and Family Strategies for Impulsivity

- State and restate clear behavioral expectations for the family in general, and for new family activities
- Post behavioral expectations / house rules for easy reference
- Establish clear social rules pertaining to social space (i.e. arm’s length)
- Establish clear family routines and stick to them
- Avoid excessive unstructured time
- Monitor the child’s level of stimulation; avoid activities that are over-stimulating and those that are under-stimulating
- Maintain supervision of the child at all times
- Keep close proximity to the child to intervene if s/he acts impulsively
- Assist the child in beginning new tasks to decrease impulsivity in his/her approach
- Provide extra support through transitions; provide a separate transition time for the child if necessary (i.e. 5 minutes before stopping an activity)
- Teach the child strategies for waiting patiently (i.e. playing a game, doodling/drawing)
- Reinforce close approximations of desired behavior; recognize effort and improvement in behavioral control
- Teach the child decision making steps and reinforce the child when he or she makes reasoned decisions
- Use real world examples to teach the child to think before acting
- Help the child develop increased self-awareness about his or her behavior

Home and Family Strategies for Hyperactivity

- Surround the child with peers / family members who tend to stay on task
- Design highly motivating projects with ample opportunity for hands-on involvement
- Ensure child has opportunities for movement throughout the day/night
- Allow the child opportunities to stand while completing tasks / homework
- Provide regularly scheduled breaks and/or opportunities for the child to move around in between family activities
- Give the child an outlet for physical restlessness, such as a squeeze ball or soothing stone
- Offer more positive reinforcements than negative consequences
- Maintain open and frequent communication with school personnel
- Provide direct and/or inadvertent social skills training whenever possible
- Make use of additional adults who may be available to role model and/or care for child
- Integrate daily physical activity (e.g. shooting hoops, climbing trees) throughout the week that is not contingent on good behavior