

# ADHD

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.  
Clinical information has been approved by West Sussex practitioners.



## What is ADHD?

'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD) refers to a neurological condition with behavioural symptoms that include poor concentration, restlessness and fidgeting, impulsiveness and being easily distracted. ADHD is the most common neurological condition in the UK. It affects around 2 to 5 per cent of school-age children and is more common in boys than girls. For most people ADHD is a life-long condition, although the symptoms usually improve with age. However, some people may continue to experience difficulties into adulthood.

## Characteristics of ADHD

There are two types of behavioural symptoms that characterise ADHD:

- **Inattentiveness** – signs include: having a short attention span and being easily distracted; appearing forgetful or losing things; finding it difficult to listen or follow instructions; constantly changing activity.
- **Hyperactivity and impulsiveness** – signs include: being unable to sit still or to concentrate on tasks; excessive movement or talking; interrupting; acting without thinking; having little or no sense of danger.

The behavioural symptoms that lead to a diagnosis of ADHD are usually noticeable in children before the age of six and will be seen in more than one setting (such as home and school). Some people with ADHD also have learning difficulties and problems with sleep. ADHD is also common amongst people who have autism.

Children who only have difficulties with inattention tend to be diagnosed with 'attention deficit disorder' (ADD), which can go unnoticed because the symptoms may be less obvious.

## Causes of ADHD

The exact causes of ADHD are unknown. It tends to run in families and research suggests that parents and siblings of a child with ADHD are four to five times more likely to have it themselves. Various other risk factors are thought to play a part, but firm links have not been made, so more research is needed.

## Types of therapy

There is no known 'cure' for ADHD but there are a number of therapies and intervention that can help to manage it, including:

- **Behaviour therapy** – uses a system of positive reinforcement to help parents, families and sometimes teachers to encourage improved behaviour in children with ADHD.
- **Diet and exercise** – the NHS recommends regular exercise and a balanced diet for children with ADHD. Cutting down on certain foods such as sugar can help with symptoms – speak to your GP or a dietician for advice on changes to diet.
- **Medication** – a number of drugs are available to provide short-term treatment for ADHD and to help people to feel calmer and to concentrate. Four drugs are licensed in the UK – methylphenidate, dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine and atomoxetine.
- **Social skills training** – using role play and drama to help children learn how they should behave in specific social situations.



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- **Talking therapies** – regular contact with a counsellor, psychologist or psychotherapist is known to help children better understand and manage their condition.

### Ask about

- **ADHD Parent Support Group** – based in the Maybridge Children and Family Centre, Worthing and also on Facebook.
- **Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – doctors and therapists who help children and young people with mental health issues. Referrals must be made by a professional from health, social care or an educational setting.
- **Child Disability Service** – a social work service for children and young people with severe and/or complex disabilities, it works with families and other agencies to ensure they get the right support. Call: **01403 229888** or email: [cdt@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:cdt@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk). Please note that some children may be referred on to the MASH (see contact details below).
- **Compass Card West Sussex** – a free leisure discount card for 0 to 25 year olds with SEND, which is run by Amaze. Find out more at: [www.amazebrighton.org.uk](http://www.amazebrighton.org.uk) or by calling: **0300 123 9186**.
- **Independent Support** – Amaze's Independent Supporters provide advice and support to parent carers and young people applying for or transferring to an EHC Plan in Sussex. For Sussex Independent Support, call: **0300 123 7782**.
- **Learning and Behaviour Advice Team** – work with individual primary aged pupils and their schools to support inclusion and raise attainment. For further information search for them at: [www.wsgfl.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.wsgfl.westsussex.gov.uk), or ask your child's school for details.
- **MASH** – support from health and social care. If your child is under 18, call the MASH, tel: **01403 229888**, email: [MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk). For over 18s call the Adult Social CarePoint: **01243 642121**, or email: [socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk).
- **Portage** – a home-based educational programme tailored to a child's individual needs. Available to very young children. Chichester: **01243 536182**, Crawley: **01293 572480**, Horsham and Mid-Sussex: **01444 243150**, Worthing: **01903 242558**.
- **Reaching Families** – runs a number of workshops that can help parents of children with ADHD. For more details on our latest workshops go to: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk).
- **Social Communication Team** – team of qualified specialists with expertise in autism who aim to promote the educational, social and emotional development of children and young people, working with their parents and educational settings. Ask your child's school for further information.
- **Other resources** – the Ashdown Club, Worthing: **01903 528607**; Kangaroos, Haywards Heath: **01444 459108**; PACSO, Chichester: **01243 533353**; Springboard Project, Crawley: **01293 531963**, Horsham: **01403 218888**.

### Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** – our handy parent/carer guide contains information and advice on benefits, support for your child at school, getting help from social services and accessing social & leisure activities – [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk).
- **ADHD Information Services (ADDISS)** – [www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk).
- **Disability living allowance (DLA)** – your child may qualify for DLA, a state benefit that will help with their care. For more visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for 'DLA'.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to <https://westsussex.local-offer.org> and search for 'ADHD'.
- **Young Minds** – the mental health charity for young people has a section of their website devoted to ADHD with fact sheets and advice. Visit: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk).

