

General Tips and Guidelines for Parents of Children With ADHD



General Tips

- ✓ Rules should be clear and brief. Your child should know exactly what you expect from him or her.
- ✓ Give your child chores. This will give him or her a sense of responsibility and boost self-esteem.
- ✓ Short lists of tasks are excellent to help a child remember.
- ✓ Routines are extremely important for children with ADHD. Set up regular times for meals, homework, TV, getting up, and going to bed. Follow through with the schedule!
- ✓ Identify what your child is good at doing (like art, math, and computer skills) and build on it.
- ✓ Tell your child that you love and support him or her unconditionally.
- ✓ Catch your child being good and give immediate positive feedback.

Common Daily Problems

It is very hard to get my child ready for school in the morning.

- Create a schedule for rising and getting ready in the morning

Morning Routine



Alarm goes off



Brush teeth



Wash face



Get dressed



Eat Breakfast

→ Take Medication



Get on School Bus

- Reward and praise your child. This will motivate your child to succeed. Even if your child does not succeed in all parts of the “morning routine,” use praise to reward your child when he or she is successful. Progress is often made in a series of small steps.
- If your child is on medication, try waking your child up 30 to 45 minutes before the usual wake time and give him or her the medication immediately. Then allow your child to “rest” in bed for the next 30 minutes. This rest period will allow the medication to begin working and your child will be better able to participate in the morning routine.

My child is very irritable in the late afternoon/early evening.

(Common side effect of stimulant medications)

- The late afternoon and evening is often a very stressful time for all children in all families because parents and children have had to “hold it together” at work and at school.
- If your child is on medication, he or she may also be experiencing “rebound” – the time when your child’s medication is wearing off and ADHD symptoms may reappear.
- Adjust your child’s dosage schedule so that the medication is not wearing off during a time of “high demand” (for example, when homework or chores are usually being done).
- Create a period of “downtime” when your child can do calm activities like listen to music; take a bath, read, etc.
- Alternatively, let your child “blow off extra energy and tension” by doing some physical exercise.
- Talk to your child’s doctor about giving your child a smaller dose of medication in the late afternoon. This is called a “stepped down” dose and helps a child transition off of medication in the evening.

My child is losing weight or not eating enough.

(Common side effects of stimulant medication use)

- Encourage breakfast with calorie-dense foods.
- Give the morning dose of medication after your child has already eaten breakfast. Afternoon doses should also be given after lunch.
- Provide your child with nutritious after-school and bedtime snacks that are high in protein and in complex carbohydrates. Some examples include: nutrition/protein bars, shakes/drinks made with protein powder, liquid meals.
- Get eating started with any highly preferred food before giving other foods.
- Consider shifting dinner to a time later in the evening when your child’s medication has worn off. Alternatively, allow your child to “graze” in the evening on healthy snacks, as he or she must be hungriest right before bed.
- Follow your child’s height and weight with careful measurements at your child’s doctor’s office and talk to your child’s doctor.